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THE ANIME & MANGA MAGAZINE

# PROTOCULTURE ADDICTS

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- GENE SHAFT
- KAZEMAKASE TSUKIKAGE RAN
- SADAMITSU
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- SPRIGGAN
- ANGELIC LAYER
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Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

**DVD Releases And 3D CG Anime In 2002!** Well, Spring 2002 is here and our world is still very uncertain, especially with all the strange cases stirred up by the war against terrorism (cases such as American Taliban fighter John Walker Lindh, *Wall Street Journal*'s reporter Daniel Pearl's murder, etc.), and yet, the Japanese anime industry is producing many great titles to cheer up the fans! One great thing I noticed is that so many DVDs are made to sell old and new titles! Old and new, you may ask? Yes, right now in Japan, the DVD market is filled with "Box Set" packages of old anime shows from the 1970-80's (such as *Dunbine*, *Dragonar*, etc.). Newcomer anime fans and young viewers (particularly teens) do not really know those titles (some of them were not even born when those shows were made...), therefore these new fans can more easily buy old anime shows and enjoy those classics. And I am sure that American releasers will follow this trend! Also, anime shows that were very popular in the 1960-70's, such as *Cyborg 009* (whose new version just came out in 2001), are coming back as new, updated shows. Instead of hoping to see these old shows as re-runs on TV, fans can just go to the store, buy the DVD and enjoy the shows as they were meant to be seen. Anime shows, just like movie classics, can teach younger viewers about history and even, maybe, watch them with their parents. How about *Aim At The Ace!*, *Tomorrow's Joe* , *The Rose Of Versailles*, all of them Directed by Osamu Dezaki? Yes, time surely flies and I cannot believe that *Urusei Yatsura* was first broadcast in 1981 (21 years ago already!)!. Also, I highly recommend *Sherlock Hound* from Pioneer (in English) to younger viewers so that they can discover the past works of Hayao Miyazaki.

Another trend is definitely the 3D Computer Graphics shows! When this technique was first used (remember *Blue Submarine #6* ?), we felt it was still very experimental. But the feature film *Metropolis*, directed by Rintaro, has reached perfection, I think. In this issue, we are introducing you to a new show, titled *Gene Shaft*, and we are sure that viewers will be quite surprised to see such high quality 3D CG in a TV anime! Shows like *Soul Taker*, *Arjuna*, *Vandread: The Second Stage*, *Guystars*, etc. have developed the technique to the point that 3D CG no longer looks "fake" or inorganic... And anime creators will be improving the techniques as years go by! Let us hope this trend will continue and we will be able to see more excellent shows!

Miyako Matsuda

• • •

Spring is now here and there is more snow outside than there ever was during winter. Go figure! Anyway, the new season will bring lots of improvements for the magazine, one of them being a new official web address: www.protoculture-mag.com (the web site can also be accessed by www.protoculture.ca, but the old www.protoculture.qc.ca is still working). We are working on a new web page design that should be gradually introduced during the next months or so. We have also produced a new, slightly different cover design (this cover is different, but that's not it) that will appear on the cover of next issue!

This issue is offering a spotlight on *Heavy Gear*. This 40-episode, CG animated TV series, produced by Sony Pictures Family Entertainment and animated by Mainframe Entertainment, is not a Japanimation, but is certainly quite anime-inspired. The first 26 episodes recently aired in the USA (on 171 TV stations, mostly on Saturday mornings) and around the world. Based on Dream Pod 9 popular game universe, the series follows the adventures of Marcus, a young Gear pilot just recruited into the Shadow Dragons, a special dueling squad of the Southern Milicia. The article offers an overview of the series, character & mecha files, as well as synopses for the first 26 episodes. To celebrate the release of this series, *Protoculture Addicts* has adopted the cover's layout of *Mecha Press*, an anime modeling & gaming magazine that was published by DP9's staff – who created the *Heavy Gear* universe.

This issue also features an article on the movie *Spriggan* (an ADV Films release currently being shown in theatres), an Interview with ADV's Matt Greenfield, a short presentation of the OVA series *FLCL* (*Fooly Cooly*), the usual "Anime World" articles (The Modern Japanese Music Database Part 14, more convention & festival reports), the reviews of lots of recent anime & manga-related products (videos, DVDs, CDs, books, model kits, etc.) and the latest news. Of course, *Protoculture Addicts* continues to offer lots of overviews on new anime titles to introduce you to Japanese animation of all styles: *Ah! My Goddess* The Movie, *Angelic Layer* (by CLAMP), *Gene Shaft*, *Inital D* (OVA, Movie and Character Files), *Kazemakase Tsuki Kage Ran*, *Sadamitsu The Destroyer*, and *Tales Of Eternia*. Enjoy!

**Next Issue**: A spotlight on *Ronin Warriors* / *Yoroiden Samurai Troopers* and tons of (ok, twelve) "Anime Stories" (short overview, with sometimes character profiles and synopses) to introduce you to even more brand new anime series: *Anime Complex Night*, *Comet-san*, *Earth Defense Family*, *Final Fantasy Unlimited*, *Fruits Basket*, *Mazinkaizer*, *Offside*, *One Piece* TV Special & Movie, *Shaman King*, *Sister Princess*, *Tottoko Hamutaro*, *Z.O.E.: Dolores, I*, and more! Coming in May — Also, PA#72 will be dedicated to Hayao Miyazaki (*Spirited Away*, *Future Boy Conan*, etc.) and the cover article of PA#73 will be on *Char's CounterAttack*! Don't miss them!

Claude J. Pelletier
editor@protoculture-mag.com

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Kenyu Destroy Bardell (Order #5003683)

## — JAPAN — JAPAN — JAPAN — JAPAN — JAPAN —

**OBITUARY: Ryuichi Yokoyama (1909-2001)**. The legendary Japanese cartoonist Mr. Ryuichi Yokoyama passed away on November 8th 2001. Most of PA's readers probably never heard of him. He was 92 year-old and one of the very first manga creators of Japan. His best known manga was *Fuku-chan* ("The Little boy Named Happiness") and older generation of Japanese grew up with this newspaper manga strip — the longest-running in Japanese history, from 1936 to 1971! Japan's manga base was established by Toba Sojo in 12th Century Japan with the *Chôjûgisa* ("Animal Scrolls") and the word "Manga" came from Hokusai's manga in the Edo Era (1600-1867), but Mr. Yokoyama was one of the very first manga artists to adopt modern American style in the 1930's, and was the leader of the manga industry before, during and after the World War II. Through his newspaper strips (and, later, manga books), he made manga into an household item to be loved. He established the "Manga Shudan" (the Group Of Manga) for manga artists in the 30s to help young newcomers to get some work. He also created, in 1955, one of the very early Japanese animation works, a TV series titled *On-bu Obake* (A Ghost Is Carried On Your Back), and created his own anime studio, Otogi Production (Folktale Production). He used to wear a beret (later, Dr. Osamu Tezuka will do the same) and this was expressing his identity as an artist. To honour Mr. Yokoyama and his works, the museum "Yokoyama Manga House" will open in April 2002, in Kochi City. For more information on Mr. Yokoyama, you can take a look at Mr. Frederik L. Schodt's book *Manga! Manga!* (pages 55-59) and see some illustrations of his artwork. Many anime fans think that Dr. Tezuka was THE pioneer, and this is true if we think in terms of the post-WW2 era (he did made anime & manga so popular that it became an "industry"), but artists like Mr. Yokoyama (or Suiho Tagawa, creator of *Norakuro* in the 30s, which was deeply influenced by American comics) were already there to establish the base of the manga industry. If they want to learn more about Japanese history, young fans should really have a look on Mr. Yokoyama's works. (Sources: Newtype 02-2002, Frederik L. Schodt *Manga! Manga!*)

**CLAMP's new manga, *Chobits*** (means "ittsy bittsy bits") is going to be adapted as an anime TV series. In the manga, Japan is quite different from today. Everyone has a personal computer that looks like a real human being. The story begins when the main character, Kazuhide, finds an abandoned "Chi" (means "small") personal computer and brings it back home. Due to its erotic content, this anime will be shown around Midnight or even later... (Source: *Animage* #284, Feb. 2002)

**Fujishima Kosuke**, famous creator of *Ah! My Goddess*, has two new projects: **eX-Driver The Movie.** A popular OVA series, *eX-Driver* will become a movie, planned and designed by Kosuke Fujishima himself and directed by Akira Nishimori. The stage is the US and the main characters will compete with very strong and skillful drivers! The movie will be 60 minutes long and a special, 30-minute long episode, directed by Shin-ichi Watanabe, will be shown as well in the theaters. It will focus on Nina and Ray when they were a team and still very young... **Piano.** Originally, this was a popular Drama CD. Mr. Fujishima is working on this TV anime project as character designer. It is the story of junior high school student Miu Nomura who has a great talent to play piano and her piano instructor, Mr. Shirakawa, wants to help her exploit her potential. This anime TV show will be shown in Spring 2002. (Source: *Animage* #283, Jan. 2002)

**Gatekeepers 21.** Due to its great popularity, *Gatekeepers* is coming back as a six episodes OVA series. This time, the stage is not the 1960's: it is today, in a very different setting, with new invaders and Gatekeepers. The main characters are two female high school students, Ayane and Miwa. Ayane is the daughter of the original TV series' character, Ukiya. The series is directed by Hiroshi Yamaguchi, while the animation director is Keiji Goto (who did the character designs for the TV series). Studio Gonzo will do the animation. (Source: *Animage* #283, Jan. 2002)

**Keiji Goto becomes director for the *Kiddy Grade* TV show**. Mr. Goto is a very well known character designer and illustrator, who worked on shows like *Nadesico* and *Gatekeepers*. He is now making his debut as TV anime director for this new show, titled *Kiddy Grade*. Basically, this is a New Century Girls / Space Opera set in the 25th Century. Main character Éclair (means "Lightning") is an agent for an organization guarding the trade routes between planets. Éclair's partner is Lumière (means "Light") who is a genius at computer whiz. This is an international spy/action anime set in space and we will keep you informed as more details come out! (Source: *Animage* #284, Feb. 2002)

***Spirited Away* Wins Some Awards!** Not only Hayao Miyazaki's latest anime received the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival (which is a huge honor), but it also received the award for the Best Picture at the 25th Japanese Academy Awards (more details on the ceremony and other winners in next issue)! Miyazaki also received an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Academy for the whole of his 40-year career as anime director! (Source: www.filmfestivals.com)

***WXIII Patlabor: Patlabor The Movie 3.*** It has been nine years since the last *Patlabor* movie was released. *Patlabor The Movie 3* will be released for March 2002, with a story based on the original manga by Headgear, titled *The Industrial Waste #13*. The general animation director is Fumihiko Takayama (*Gundam 0080*), while the coordinator is Yutaka Izubuchi (the famous *Gundam* and *Patlabor* designer). Along with this movie, *Mini-Pat*, a parody short movie in full digital animation by Mamoru Oshii, will also be released. (Source: *Animage* #283, Jan. 2002)

• ***Hack*** **("Dot Hack").** Directed by Koichi Mashita (*Noir*), screenplayed by Kazunori Itoh (*Patlabor*) and with character designs by Yoshiyuki Sadamoto (*Evangelion*). For fans who have been waiting for high quality anime. The story takes place in a near future network game, called "The World". (Source: *Animage* #284, Feb. 2002)

***All About Japan Anime*** is a new reference published in Japanese by Takarajimasha Publishing. The book covers 85 years of anime history and offers data about anime produced since 1917, over 300 color illustrations, as well as commentary by famous directors like Anno, Miyazazki, Oshii, and Otomo. ISBN: 4-7966-2626-3, ¥1143. (Source: ANN)

**CDJapan.co.jp** is launching a character goods store that will carry goods based on popular anime shows such as *Noir*, *Sister Princess*, *Air*, among others. Those goods includes cloth wall hangings, keychains, clear folders, masco figures, paperbags, etc. Check them out: www.cdjapan.co.jp/anime/goods/

**Spring 2002 TV Series** includes: *.Hack*, *Chobits*, *Galaxy Angel*, *Happy Lesson*, *Initial D Battle Stage*, *Jyuni Kokuki* (12 Countries Story), *Kick Off 2002*, *King Bandit Jing*, *Rockman Exe*, *Tenchi Muyo Gxp*, *Tokyo Underground*. (Source: ANN)

**TOEI Anime Fair Spring 2002 titles** are ***One Piece The Movie: Chopper Kingdom Of The Weird Beast Island.*** Due to the explosion of an oceanic volcano, Chopper was flown to a weird island full of beasts! But Chopper becomes King of the island and the beasts begin to adore him! — ***Digimon Tamers: Reckless Driving! Digimon Express!*** This time, the enemy is Digimon Loco-Mon! Loco-Mon shows up to destroy Tokyo! What is his purpose? Takato and friends have to stop Loco-Mon's reckless driving! (Source: *Animage* #284, Feb. 2002)

**Top 10 Anime** TV Series in Japan for February were (in order): *Chitchana Yukitsukai Sugar* (Tiny Snow Fairy Sugar), *Onegai Teacher* (Please, Teacher), *Fruits Basket*, *Comet-san*, *Figure 17*, *Scryed*, *Mootto! Oja-Majo Doremi*, *Kokoro Toshokan*, *Rahxephon* and *Shichinin no Nana*. In the top 20, we also noticed *Full Metal Panic* (11th), *Hellsing* (12th), *Hikaru no Go* (14th) and *Vandread 2nd Stage* (15th). (Source: ANN)

**Weib Kreuz Glüchen.** A new TV series is coming in March 2002. Starring the original Bishonen characters of Aya, Yoji, Ken and Omi, this show offers a lot of crime and action scenes. The storyline is the continuation of the previous TV and OVA series. Directed by Hitoyuki Matsui. (Source: *Animage* #283, Jan. 2002)

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| TENCHI MUYO! #11: GUARDIANS OF LEGEND (Toon.) | P | D | 62 | 14.98 | 7+ | 02/12 |
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| CERES, CELESTIAL LEGEND #7: REQUIEM | VV | D | 78 | 24.95 | 16+ | 02/26 |
| NADIA #7: NADIA'S ISLAND | ADV | D | 100 | 19.98 | 12+ | 03/12 |
| SAILOR MOON #19: TIME TRAVELERS | ADV | D | 90 | 12.98 | G | 03/12 |
| SAILOR MOON #20: LOVE CONQUERS ALL | ADV | D | 90 | 12.98 | G | 03/12 |
| CARDCAPTOR SAKURA #8: SWEET TROUBLE | P | S | 100 | 24.98 | 13+ | 03/12 |
| GATEKEEPERS #4: THE NEW THREAT | P | D | 75 | 24.98 | 13+ | 03/12 |
| VANDREAD #2: NIRVANA | P | D | 75 | 24.98 | 13+ | 03/12 |
| ST. TAIL: THIEF OF HEART #4: MOONLIGHT | TP | D | 100 | 19.99 | G | 03/12 |
| MAETEL LEGEND | USM | D | 85 | 19.99 | 13+ | 03/12 |
| NOW AND THEN, HERE AND THERE #2: FLIGHT & FALL | USM | D | 100 | 19.99 | 16+ | 03/12 |
| SAILOR MOON SUPER S #3 (Edited/Uncut) | P | D | 70/80 | 14.98 ea | 7+/13+ | 03/19 |
| SAILOR MOON SUPER S #4 (Uncut) | P | D | 70 | 14.98 | 13+ | 03/19 |
| ORPHEN #4: MYSTERE | ADV | D | 125 | 19.98 | 12+ | 03/26 |
| DE:VADASY | AW | D | 75 | 19.95 | 13+ | 03/26 |
| GOKUDO #2: MAGICIAN EXTRAORDINAIRE (Ep. 6-9) | AW | D | 100 | 24.95 | 13+ | 03/26 |
| KNIGHT HUNTERS #2: LOST BOYS (Ep. 6-10) | AW | D/S | 125 | 24.95 ea | 13+ | 03/26 |
| RUROUNI KENSHIN #16: SON OF GOD (Eps. 67-70) | AW | D/S | 100 | 24.95 ea | 13+ | 03/26 |
| THE VANILLA SERIES: BONDAGE MANSION | CM | D | 60 | 19.98 | 18+ | 03/26 |
| ONI TENSEI #3: A WOMAN'S FURY | KM | D | 30 | 24.95 | 18+ | 03/26 |
| CARDCAPTORS THE MOVIE (Edited) | P | D | 86 | 14.98 | 7+ | 03/26 |
| VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU TV #4: MYSTERY | TP | D | 125 | 19.99 | 13+ | 03/26 |
| CERES, CELESTIAL LEGEND #8: DENOUEMENT | VV | D | 75 | 24.95 | 16+ | 03/26 |
| POKEMON (#51): JOHTO JOURNEYS #13 | VV | D | 70 | 14.98 | 3+ | 03/26 |
| RANMA 1/2 RANDOM RHAPSODY #8 | VV | D | 78 | 24.95 | 13+ | 03/26 |
| CARDCAPTORS #8: TIMES OF NEED (Edited) | P | D | 75 | 14.98 | 7+ | 04/02 |
| LA BLUE GIRL RETURNS: DEMON SEED | A18 | D | 60 | 29.99 | 18+ | 04/09 |
| MS GUNDAM #8: THE BATTLE OF SOLOMON (Ep. 33-36) | B | D | 100 | 14.98 | 13+ | 04/09 |
| MS GUNDAM #9: NEW TYPE (Ep. 37-39) | B | D | 75 | 14.98 | 13+ | 04/09 |
| TENCHI MUYO! #12: THE TRUE PRINCE (Toonami) | P | D | 82 | 14.98 | 7+ | 04/09 |
| ZOIDS #1: THE BATTLE BEGINS | VV | D | 88 | 14.98 | 7+ | 04/09 |
| YU YU HAKUSHO #1: YUSUKE LOST, YUSUKE FOUND | FN | D | 80 | 19.95 | 13+ | 04/16 |
| YU YU HAKUSHO #2: ARTIFACTS OF DARKNESS | FN | D | 60 | 19.95 | 13+ | 04/16 |
| NADIA #8: THE SECRET CAVE | ADV | D | 100 | 19.98 | 12+ | 04/23 |
| DRAGON BALL Z #70: MAJIN BUU EMERGENCE (Ed./Unc.) | FN | D | 62 | 14.95/19.95 | 13+ | 04/23 |
| MEDABOTS #1: TRANSPORT METABEE! | ADV | D | 125 | 14.98 | G | 04/30 |
| KUROGANE COMMUNICATION #2 (Ep. 9-16) | AW | D | 120 | 19.95 | 13+ | 04/30 |
| MAGIC USER'S CLUB TV #4 (Eps 11-13) | AW | D/S | 75 ea | 19.95 ea | 13+ | 04/30 |
| RUROUNI KENSHIN #17: HOLY WAR (Eps. 71-74) | AW | D/S | 100 | 24.95 ea | 13+ | 04/30 |
| VANILLA SERIES (THE): MEIKING #1 | CM | D | 60 | 19.98 | 18+ | 04/30 |
| LUPIN III #1: SECRET OF THE TWILIGHT GEMINI | FN | D | 90 | 19.95 | 13+ | 04/30 |
| ONI TENSEI #4: A DEMON'S HORN | KM | D | 30 | 24.95 | 18+ | 04/30 |
| STRANGE DAWN #2: STRANGE JOURNEY (Edited) | UV | D | 68 | 12.95 | NR | 04/30 |
| ORPHEN #5: THE SOUL STEALERS | ADV | D | 125 | 19.98 | 12+ | MAY |
| BLUE GENDER #3 (Ep. 7-9) | FN | D | 75 | 24.95 | 16+ | 05/07 |
| NIGHT SHIFT NURSES | A18 | D | 72 | 29.99 | 18+ | 05/14 |
| CARDCAPTOR SAKURA #9: WINTER WONDERLAND | P | S | 75 | 24.98 | 13+ | 05/14 |
| GATEKEEPERS #5: TO THE RESCUE! | P | D | 75 | 24.98 | 13+ | 05/14 |
| VANDREAD #3: GREAT EXPECTATIONS | P | D | 75 | 24.98 | 13+ | 05/14 |
| VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU TV #5: DARK LOVE | TP | D | 125 | 19.99 | 13+ | 05/14 |
| NOW & THEN, HERE & THERE #3: CONFLICT & CHAOS | USM | D | 100 | 19.99 | 16+ | 05/14 |
| NOW & THEN, HERE & THERE COLLECTOR`S BOX SET | USM | D | 325 | 59.99 | 16+ | 05/14 |
| BERSERK #1: WAR CRY (Ep. 1-5) | AW | D/S | 125 ea | 24.95 ea | 13+ | 05/28 |
| GOKUDO #3: GODDESS EXTRAORDINAIRE (Eps 10-13) | AW | D | 100 | 24.95 | 13+ | 05/28 |
| RUROUNI KENSHIN #18: FALL FROM GRACE (Ep. 75-78) | AW | D/S | 100 | 24.95 ea | 13+ | 05/28 |
| VANILLA SERIES (THE): MEIKING #2 | CM | D | 60 | 19.98 | 18+ | 05/28 |
| ASTROBOY (1983) #1 / #2 / #3 (Ep. 1-5 / 6-10 / 11-15) | ME | D | 150 ea | 19.95 ea | G | 05/28 |
| MS GUNDAM #10: LALAH'S FATE (Ep. 40-43) | B | D | 100 | 14.98 | 16+ | 06/04 |
| SAILOR MOON SUPER S #5 (Edited/Uncut) | P | D | 70/80 | 14.98 ea | 7+/13+ | 06/11 |
| SAILOR MOON SUPER S #6 (Uncut) | P | D | 70 | 14.98 | 13+ | 06/11 |
| PATLABOR TV SERIES #2 | USM | D | 120 | 19.99 | 3+ | 06/11 |
| ZOIDS #2: THE HIGH SPEED BATTLE | VV | D | 88 | 14.98 | 7+ | 06/11 |
| YU YU HAKUSHO #3: NEW APPRENTICE | FN | D | 60 | 19.95 | 13+ | 06/12 |
| YU YU HAKUSHO #4: GATE OF BETRAYAL | FN | D | 60 | 19.95 | 13+ | 06/12 |
| GUNDRESS | AW | D | 82 | 19.95 | 13+ | 06/25 |
| KNIGHT HUNTERS #3: LONE HEART (Ep. 11-15) | AW | D/S | 125 | 24.95 ea | 13+ | 06/25 |
| KUROGANE COMMUNICATION #3: FUTURE HORIZONS | AW | D | 125 | 19.95 | 13+ | 06/25 |
| RUROUNI KENSHIN #19: DREAMS OF YOUTH (Ep. 79-82) | AW | D/S | 100 | 24.95 ea | 13+ | 06/25 |
| EVANGELION THE MOVIE: DEATH & REBIRTH | ME | D/S | 90 ea | 19.95/24.95 | 13+ | 06/25 |
| GHOST SWEEPER MIKAMI | ME | D | 60 | 19.95 | 16+ | 06/25 |
| VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU TV #6: THE LAST SHINMA | TP | D | 125 | 19.99 | 13+ | 07/16 |
| ASTROBOY #4 / #5 / #6 (Ep. 16-21 / 22-27 / 28-33) | ME | D | 180 ea | 19.95 ea | G | 08/27 |
| ASTROBOY #7 / #8 / #9 (Ep. 34-39 / 40-45 / 46-51) | ME | D | 180 ea | 19.95 ea | G | 11/26 |
| EVANGELION THE MOVIE: THE END OF EVANGELION | ME | D/S | 90 ea | 19.95/24.95 | 13+ | UNKN |
| VIRUS #1 | ME | D/S | | 19.95/24.95 | | UNKN |

## • DVD • DVD • DVD • DVD •

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BOOGIEPOP PHANTOM DVD BOX SET | RS | B | 360 | 99.95 | 15+ | 02/12 |
| VAMPIRE HUNTER D: BLOODLUST | UV | D | 105 | 29.95 | R | 02/12 |
| LOVE HINA #1: MOVING IN (Ep. 1-4) | IG/B | B | 100 | 29.98 | 13+ | 02/19 |
| MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM — 0080 #1 (Ep. 1-3) | B | B | 90 | 29.98 | 13+ | 02/19 |
| KUROGANE COMMUNICATION #1 (Ep. 1-8) | AW | B | 100 | 24.95 | 13+ | 02/26 |
| RUROUNI KENSHIN #15: THE FIREFLY'S WISH (Eps 63-66) | AW | B | 100 | 29.95 | 13+ | 02/26 |
| SHERLOCK HOUND CASE FILE #1 (Ep. 1-5) | P | B | 125 | 29.98 | 7+ | 02/26 |
| CERES, CELESTIAL LEGEND #7: REQUIEM | VV | B | 78 | 29.98 | 16+ | 02/26 |
| SOUL TAKER #1: THE MONSTER WITHIN | P | B | 75 | 29.98 | 16+ | 02/26 |
| BUBBLEGUM CRASH: TOTAL CRASH | AE | B | 135 | 24.95 | 16+ | MAR |
| URUSEI YATSURA TV SERIES #5 (Ep 17-20)-6 (Ep 21-24) | AE | S | 100 ea | 24.95 ea | 13+ | MAR |
| D VINE #1-4 / BOX SET | NT | | | 24.95/79.95 | | MAR |
| KARAKURI NINJA GIRL #1-2 / BOX SET | NT | | | 24.95/39.95 | | MAR |
| JIN-ROH: THE WOLF BRIGADE | B | B | 102 | 29.98 | 16+ | 03/05 |
| JIN-ROH: THE WOLF BRIGADE SPECIAL EDITION | B | B | 142 | 59.98 | 16+ | 03/05 |
| PILOT CANDIDATE #3: WORKING TOGETHER (Ep. 7-9) | B | B | 75 | 24.98 | 13+ | 03/05 |
| STAR BLAZERS SERIES 2 #3 (COMET EMPIRE ep. 10-13) | VE | D | 112 | 29.95 | G | 03/05 |
| NADIA #7: NADIA`S ISLAND | ADV | B | 100 | 29.98 | 12+ | 03/12 |
| CARDCAPTOR SAKURA #8: SWEET TROUBLE | P | S | 75 | 29.98 | 13+ | 03/12 |
| GATEKEEPERS #4: THE NEW THREAT | P | B | 75 | 29.98 | 13+ | 03/12 |
| VANDREAD #2: NIRVANA | P | B | 75 | 29.98 | 13+ | 03/12 |
| SAINT TAIL: THIEF OF HEART #4: MOONLIGHT (Ep. 12-15) | TP | B | 100 | 29.99 | G | 03/12 |
| MAETEL LEGEND | USM | B | 85 | 29.99 | 13+ | 03/12 |
| NOW AND THEN, HERE AND THERE #2: FLIGHT & FALL | USM | B | 100 | 29.99 | 16+ | 03/12 |
| URUSEI YATSURA TV SERIES #7 | AE | S | 100 | 24.95 | 13+ | 03/15 |
| LEGEND OF CRYSTANIA #2: THE CHAOS RING | ADV | B | 135 | 29.98 | 12+ | 03/19 |
| ROBOTECH (#13 / #14): NEW GENETATION #3 / #4 | ADV | D | 150 ea | 14.98 ea | G | 03/19 |
| NEW GENERATION: ROBOTECH LEGACY COLL. #7 | ADV | D | 405 | 44.98 | G | 03/19 |
| MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM – 0083 #2 (Ep. 5-7) | B | B | 75 | 29.98 | 13+ | 03/19 |
| MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM – THE 8TH MS TEAM: MILLER'S REPORT | B | B | 50 | 29.98 | 13+ | 03/19 |
| Z-MIND (Ep. 1-6) | B | B | 150 | 34.98 | 13+ | 03/19 |
| PSYCHIC FORCE OVA | IM | B | 60 | 24.95 | | 03/19 |
| SAILOR MOON SUPER S PEGASUS COLL. #2 | P | B | 140 | 29.98 | 13+ | 03/19 |
| GREAT TEACHER ONIZUKA (GTO) #1 (Ep. 1-4) | TP | B | 120 | 29.98 | 16+ | 03/19 |
| FLCL #1: FOOLY COOLY | IG/SP | B | 60 | 29.95 | 13+ | 03/20 |

**Continues on page 8**

## • LIVE-ACTION •

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tokyo Mafia: Wrath Of The Yakuza DVD | APC | B | 90 | 29.99 | 02/12 |
| Gonin 2 DVD | TS | | | 29.95 | 02/26 |
| Beautiful Hunter DVD | APC | B | 90 | 29.99 | 03/12 |
| Black Angel 2 DVD | TS | B | 90 | 29.95 | 03/26 |
| Wild Criminal DVD | TS | B | 90 | 29.95 | 03/26 |
| Tokyo Mafia: Battle For Shinjuku DVD | APC | B | 85 | 29.99 | 04/09 |
| J-Idols: Matsumi / Miki | TP | | | | 04/23 |
| Zero Woman: Final Mission DVD | TS | B | 81 | 29.95 | 04/30 |
| Dimension Travelers (The) DVD | APC | B | 95 | 29.99 | 05/14 |
| Beautiful Killing Machine | APC | B | 94 | 29.99 | 06/11 |
| Sunny Gets Blue / Blowback: Love & Death DVD | APC | B | 160 | 29.99 | 06/11 |

## • SOUNDTRACKS •

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gunvalkyrie | TP | | | | 04/12 |
| Samurai X (Rurouni Kenshin) OVA CD Soundtrack | ATX | 55 | 16 | 14.98 | 04/30 |
| BoogiePop Phantom Original Soundtrack 2-CD Set | ATX | 85 | 13 | 24.98 | 04/30 |
| BoogiePop Phantom: Music Inspired by BP etc | ATX | 40 | 11 | 14.98 | 04/30 |
| Real Bout Hight School | TP | | | | 05/21 |
| Best of Lost Universe CD Soundtrack | ATX | 72 | 15 | 14.98 | 05/28 |
| Martian Successor Nadesico TV CD Soundtrack | ATX | 41 | 11 | 14.98 | 05/28 |
| Slayers Try VOX CD Soundtrack | ATX | 45 | 10 | 14.98 | 05/28 |

## LEGEND:

**Anime / Live-Action**: A18: Anime 18 (CPM); ADV: A.D. Vision; AE: AnimEigo; APC: Asia Pulp Cinema; AW: AnimeWorks (MB); B: Bandai; CM: Critical Mass (RS); CPM: Central Park Media; CTS: Columbia/TriStar; D: Disney (BV); DF: Destination Film (CTS); FN: Funimation; IG: Production I.G. Video; IM: Image; KM: Kitty Media (MB); KP: Kaiju Productions (MB); KR: Kid Rhino; MB: Media Blasters; ME: Manga Ent.; NIR: Nirvana; NT: NuTech; P: Pioneer; RS: The Right Stuf; SCP: SoftCel; SP: Synch-Point; SS: Software Scuptors (CPM); TP: Tokyo Pop; TS: Tokyo Shock (MB); USM: U.S. Manga Corps (CPM); UV: Urban Vision; VV: Viz Video; WB: Warner Brothers; S: Subtitled; D: Dubbed; B: Bilingual; M: Multilingual. The last four columns are the duration (min.), price ($US), rating and release date (street).

**Soundtrack**: ATX: AnimeTrax (RS); TP: TokyoPop. Chart lists releaser, duration (min.), number of tracks, price ($US) and release date.

**Manga**: AP: Antarctic Press; C1: ComicsOne; CPM: Central Park Media Manga; DH: Dark Horse; DK: Daikaiju; DW: Dreamwave; FB: Fanboy Comics; GO: Guardian Of Order; IC: Ironcat; IM: Image; M18: Manga 18 (CPM); RM: Redlight Manga; SF: Sexy Fruit (IC); T: Titan; TP: Tokyopop (Mixx); VIZ: Viz Comics; W: Wizard. GN: Graphic Novel. BK: Book. * Adult titles. Columns: Title, Issue, Publisher, Prices (in $US), Release Month. Sources: *Previews* and publishers' press releases.

Kenyu Destiny Bandai Order #56033683

## MANGA SELECTION

***Angelic Layer*, Vol. 1**. In the distant future, the most popular sport in Japan is Angelic Layer. Contestants use fighting dolls that they hatch and raise from eggs, called "Angels," and battle them in an arena. 12-year-old Misaki has entered the tournament with her doll Hikaru, and together they plan to take the sport by storm! Tokyopop, by Clamp, 192 pg, $9.99, avail. in May.

***Chobits* Vol. 1**. Hideki's just like every other guy in the 22nd century. He just wants a good job, a good car, and a sexy robot girlfriend to call his own. Until he lands the job, he'll never be able to afford his own "Persocom" companion. Hideki's luck changes when he discovers Chi — an adorable but seamingly stupid Persocom — tied up in a pile of trash. His first robot companion turns out to be a lot more responsibility than he expected, and she gets him into quite a few embarrassing situations. It's "boy maets girl" for the cyber age. Tokyopop, by Clamp, 192 pg, $9.99, avail. in April.

***GTO* Vol. 1**. Meat Eikichi Onizuka, a 22-year-old virgin and ex-biker. He's crude, foulmouthed, and has a split-second temper. His goal? To be the greatest high school teacher in the world! Of course, the only reason he wants to be a teacher is so he can try and score wiih the hot students... Before Onizuka can bacome a teacher, he's got to work as a student teacher to earn his credentials. He may think he's the toughest guy on campus, but when he meets his class full of bullies, blackmailers and scheming sadists, he'll have to prove it! Launching in authentic manga format (right-to-left)! Tokyopop, by Tohru Fujisawa, 200pg, b&w, $9.99, avail. in April.

***Initial D* Vol. 1**. In the shadow of Akina Mountain, street racers take an one of the most dangerous roads in the world. Among them, a Trueno AE86, "The Ghost of Akina," tears through the pass like a phantom no other car can touch. Behind the wheel is Takumi Fujiwara, a tofu delivery boy on his way to becoming the greatest street racer ever. But even with a natural talent honed simply through his love of racing, nothing could have prepared Takumi for ihe world of hardcore street racing! Tokyopop, by Shuiichi Shigeno, 200pg, b&w, $9.99, avail. in April.

***Kare Kano* Vol. 1**. Straight A's, athlete, and overall "Ms. Popularity," Yukino is the perfect student. Or at least that's how she appears to the outside world. But when the curtains are drawn, a lazy young egomaniac lurks who will do anything and everything to be the top student in her school. Yukino finds her resolve put to the test, as after years as the idol of her class, a threat emerges in the more perfect Soichiro. A good-natured, studious, and athletic boy he is her equal in every way but one — that behind the act is a genuine heart driven to succeed. Yukino is desperate to regain her status anyway she can, but through embarrassing flub-ups at every turn, Soichiro remains untouched even as they find respect for one another and maybe, after all the dust has cleared, something more. Tokyopop, by Masami Tsuda, 192 pg, b&w, $9.99, avail. in May.

***Mobile Suit Gundam: The Origin*, Vol. 1**. Zeon ace pilot, Commander Char Aznable, thought he could foil the Federation's plan to build a mobile suit by attacking their research base on colony Side 7. He was wrong. With a prototype already active, the besieged Federation forces strike back using their new weapon, the mobile suit Gundam, with devastating consequences. Amidst the fighting, young electronics wizard Amuro Ray is determined not to let his friends and family die in the crossfire. But what can one boy do to repel a squad of mobile suit-clad invaders? Viz Comics, story & art by Yoshikazu Yasuhiko, 120 pg, $7.95, avail. in April.

**Phoenix: A Tale Of The Future Vol. 1**. After several nuclear wars, civilization has gone underground due to the toxic atmosphere. The five cities resemble huge shopping malls, with each city ruled by an enormous super-computer that calculates every action for its inhabitants and rules supreme. Meet Masato, who secretly keeps a Moopie as a companion — a forbidden extraterrestrial creature capable of assuming any form and inducing hallucinations in those it contacts. In this highly regimented world, the super-computer Hallelujah cannot allow for anything outside its exacting calculations. When Hallelujah discovers Masato's secret and decrees that the Moopie, known as Tamami, must be destroyed, Masato chooses to defy the order and makes a daring escape with Tamami to find a safe haven. Their escape triggers a visitation by a mythical bird and an adventure of epic proportions. The twelve self-contained yet interlinked stories that compose *Phoenix* (*Hi no tori* in Japanese, literally "Firebird") is considered by many to be the summit of Osamu Tezuka's artistic achievement. It represents his ambitious attempt to push all he knew about the comics medium to address fundamental questions about existence. This is the second of the twelve *Phoenix* stories ("Future"). Viz Comics, story & art by Osamu Tezuka, 296-page, $22.95 U.S. ($37.95 Can), avail. in May.

***Short Cuts*, Vol. 1**. So what is this fascination with that extreme variant of the Japanese teenage girl, that highly evolved creation of Japan's frenetically trendy consumer culture... the ko-gal? *Short Cuts*, currently serialized in *Pulp* Magazine, is the comic strip that takes you on a bizarre illustrated journey into the ko-gal's world and tells readers just what goes on inside a ko-gal's over-stimulated mind. In Volume 1, experience the ko-gal world of crushes and more crushes! Mariko emerges from a puff of smoke strangely transformed — with a craving for carrots; Zero Boy is obsessed with Maria, who doesn't even know he exists; and Muku, the "adorable" babe everyone is flirting with, just happens to be a Bigfoot! Also, a hilarious spoof on shopping networks, weight-loss and a how-(NOT)-to-dress for school! Viz Comics, avail. in June.

***X/1999*, Vol. 7: Rhapsody**. The sun rises at the dawn of a new millennium, but for mankind, it may be setting. Kamui's aunt, Tokiko, is torn apart giving birth to the sacred sword that is Kamui's birthright. The gory sight drives Kotori into madness, where she meets both her dead mother in the Sea of Tears, and the prophet Kakyo, who awakens her powers as a dream seer. Then, an earthquake shakes Tokyo, startling the Dragons of Heaven and Earth with the presence of one of their equals, the sorcerer Sakura-zukamori, hated enemy of the medium Subaru (from Clamp's *Tokyo Babylon*). But among all these people of power is the "other" Kamui — Kamui's Twin Star. Viz Comics, story & art by Clamp, 200 pg, $15.95, avail. in May.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ANGELIC LAYER VOL. 1 | GN | TP | 9.99 | May |
| ANIME INVASION [magazine] | 3 | W | 4.99 | May |
| ANIMERICA EXTRA VOL. 5 [manga anthology] | 5-6 | VIZ | 4.95 | Apr/May |
| ANIMERICA VOL. 10 [magazine] | 5-6 | VIZ | 4.95 | Apr/May |
| ASTRO BOY VOL. 3-4 | GN | DH | 9.96 | May 29/June 26 |
| BASTARD!! | 5-6 | VIZ | 3.95 | Apr/May |
| BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL (#67-68): BEAST | 2-3 (/7) | DH | 2.99 | Apr 10/May 8 |
| BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL: SECRETS | GN | DH | 16.95 | June 12 |
| CANNON GOD EXAXXION Stage 1 | 6-7 (/8) | DH | 2.99 | Apr 17/May 15 |
| CARDCAPTOR SAKURA | 27-28 | TP | 2.95 | Apr/May |
| CERES CELESTIAL LEGEND PART 2 | 5-6 (/6) | VIZ | 2.95 | Apr/May |
| CHOBITS VOL. 1 | GN | TP | 9.99 | Apr |
| CORRECTOR YUI VOL. 3 | GN | TP | 9.99 | May |
| COWBOY BEBOP Vol. 1 | GN | TP | 9.99 | Apr |
| DANCE TILL TOMORROW VOL. 5 | GN | VIZ | 15.95 | Apr |
| DRAGON KNIGHTS VOL. 1 | GN | TP | 9.99 | Apr |
| DRAGONBALL (BOOK 4) | 9-10 (/10) | VIZ | 2.95 | Apr/May |
| DRAGONBALL VOL. 8 / DRAGONBALL Z VOL. 7 | GN | VIZ | 12.95 ea | May |
| DRAGONBALL Z PART 5 | 4-5 (/12) | VIZ | 2.95 | Apr/May |
| EAGLE VOL. 5 | GN | VIZ | 22.95 | Apr |
| EL-HAZARD VOL. 1 | GN | VIZ | 15.99 | May |
| FUTABA-KUN CHANGE! Vol. 8 | 3-4 | IC | 2.95 | Apr/May |
| GALAXY EXPRESS VOL. 5 | GN | VIZ | 18.95 | Apr |
| GEOBREEDERS BOOK 3 | GN | CPM | 15.95 | May |
| GTO Vol. 1-2 | GN | TP | 9.99 | Apr/May |
| GUNDAM WING : ENDLESS WALTZ | 2-3 (/5) | TP | 2.99 | Apr/May |
| GUNDAM : THE ORIGIN | 1 | VIZ | 7.95 | Apr |
| HOW TO DRAW MANGA | 14-15 | AP | 4.95 | Apr/May |
| INITIAL D VOL. 1 | GN | TP | 9.99 | Apr |
| INU YASHA VOL. 11 | GN | VIZ | 15.95 | May |
| INU-YASHA: A FEUDAL FAIRY TALE PART 6 | 12-13 (/15) | VIZ | 2.95 | Apr/May |
| ISLAND VOL. 4 | GN | TP | 9.99 | May |
| JOAN COMPLETE SET | GN | C1 | 39.50 | May |
| JULINE VOL. 5 | GN | TP | 12.99 | Apr |
| KARE KANO VOL. 1 | GN | TP | 9.99 | May |
| KODOCHA VOL. 1 | GN | TP | 9.99 | May |
| KODOCHA | 4-5 (/5) | TP | 2.95 | Apr/May |
| LODOSS WAR: CHRONICLES OF THE HEROIC KNIGHT | 19 | CPM | 2.95 | Apr |
| LODOSS WAR: DEEDLIT'S TALE | 8 | CPM | 2.95 | Apr |
| LONE WOLF AND CUB VOL. 21-22 | GN | DH | 9.95 | May 29/June26 |
| LOVE HINA VOL. 1-2 | GN | TP | 9.99 | Apr/May |
| LOVE HINA | 3-4 (/4) | TP | 2.99 | Apr |
| MAGICAL POKÉMON JOURNEY PART 7 | 2-3 (/4) | VIZ | 4.95 | Apr/May |
| MAGICAL POKÉMON JOURNEY VOL. 5 | GN | VIZ | 13.95 | Apr |
| MARMALADE BOY VOL. 1 | GN | TP | 9.99 | Apr |
| MARMALADE BOY | 5 | TP | 2.95 | Apr |
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| OH MY GODDESS! XI #9-10: MYSTERY CHILD | 7-8 (/8) | DH | 2.99 | Apr 3/May 1 |
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**Continues from page 6**

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| MIYUKI-CHAN IN WONDERLAND | ADV | S | 30 | 12.98 | 15+ | 05/07 |
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| MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM MOVIE #2: SOLDIERS OF SORROW | B | S | 138 | 24.98 | 13+ | 05/07 |
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| NIGHT SHIFT NURSES | A18 | B | 72 | 29.95 | 18+ | 05/14 |
| DEVIL HUNTER YOHKO COLLECTION 1 | ADV | B | 105 | 29.98 | 17+ | 05/14 |
| CARDCAPTOR SAKURA #9: WINTER WONDERLAND | P | S | 75 | 29.98 | 13+ | 05/14 |
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| REAL BOUT HIGH SCHOOL #1: ENTER THE SAMURAI GIRL | TP | B | 100 | 29.98 | 16+ | 05/21 |
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| WILD ARMS | ADV | B | 125 | | | WINTER |
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| Da! Da! Da! Step 4 | KIBA-666 | 3,990 | 02-28 |
| Fruits Basket Vol. 6 [Initial pressing] | KIBA-9659 | 6,300 | 02-28 |
| Shaman King 5 | KIBA-682 | 4,725 | 02-28 |
| Webdiver 8 | COBC-4111 | 4,935 | 03-01 |
| Devilman | SVWB-7094 | 3,990 | 03-06 |
| FF:U — Final Fantasy: Unlimited "Ikai no Shou" Phase.1 | AVBA-14298 | 3,990 | 03-06 |
| Rave Vol. 2 | KIBA-714 | 3,990 | 03-06 |
| Steel Angel Kurumi Zero Single Collection [Initial pressing] | PCBP-50507 | 5,775 | 03-06 |
| Kyojin no hoshi Collector's Box Vol. 2[Initial pressing] | KYO-JIN10 | 9,387 | 03-08 |
| Porco Rosso | VWDZ-8022 | 4,935 | 03-08 |
| Majin Eiyuden Wataru: TV & OVA DVD-Box | VPBY-11917 | 38,850 | 03-15 |
| Captain Tsubasa Road To Dream Goal #2 | AVBA-14317 | 5,040 | 03-20 |
| Cat's Eye Second Season Vol. 9 | COBC-90267 | 4,935 | 03-20 |
| Gatekeepers21 Vol. 1 | PCBE-50233 | 8,190 | 03-20 |
| Hunter X Hunter X3 (OVA) | PCBX-50282 | 7,140 | 03-20 |
| Jinzo Ningen Kikaider DVD-Box [Initial pressing] | SVZB-1432 | 22,050 | 03-20 |
| Maetel Legend Special DVD-BOX | AVBA-14325 | 12,600 | 03-20 |
| Memories Off 1st | SDDV-6 | 6,090 | 03-20 |
| One Piece : Piece #15 | AVBA-14307 | 5,040 | 03-20 |
| Popolocrois DVD set [Initial pressing] | SVZB-1171 | 12,600 | 03-20 |
| Ranma 1/2 TV Series — Complete Edition 2/3 | PCBA-51031/32 | 5,040 | 03-20 |
| Rurouni Kenshin: Meiji Kenkaku Romantan Part. 2 | SVWB-1308 | 5,880 | 03-20 |
| Rurouni Kenshin DVD Box Vol. 3 [Initial pressing] | SVZB-1370 | 37,065 | 03-20 |
| Samurai Girl Realbout High School Vol. 6 | PCBE-50143 | 5,250 | 03-20 |
| Steel Angel Kurumi "2-shiki" dts 5.1ch BOX [Initial pressing] | PCBP-50504 | 20,790 | 03-20 |
| Wild Arms DVD-Box [Initial pressing] | SVZB-1491 | 16,800 | 03-20 |
| Yu-Gi-Ou "Duel Monsters" Vol. 19 | PCBX-50236 | 3,990 | 03-20 |
| Bishojo Senshi Sailor Moon [Initial pressing] | DSTD-2063 | 15,750 | 03-21 |
| Cyber Formula Zero Vol. 4 | VPBV-11384 | 5,040 | 03-21 |
| Digimontamers 3 | DSTD-6073 | 6,090 | 03-21 |
| Hajime no ippo Vol. D13 | VPBY-11198 | 6,090 | 03-21 |
| Kokoro toshokan Vol. 3 | VIBF-92 | 6,090 | 03-21 |
| Motto! Ojamajo Doremi 4 | DSZS-7504 | 6,090 | 03-21 |
| Motto! Ojamajo Doremi Kaeruishi no himitsu | DSTD-2053 | 4,725 | 03-21 |
| Noir Vol. 13 | VIBF-113 | 6,090 | 03-21 |
| Project Arms Vol. 9 | SDV-2647D | 6,300 | 03-21 |
| Round Vernian Vifam: DVD-Box Part 3 | THD-90611 | 23,100 | 03-21 |
| Z.O.E : Dolores, I Crisis 09 | VPBY-11321 | 6,090 | 03-21 |
| 11 nin Iru! | PIBA-7116 | 5,040 | 03-22 |
| Ao yori Aoshi Tokuhou! [Initial pressing] | PIBA-1323 | 2,940 | 03-22 |
| Aozora Shoujotai DEFCON 4 to 6 [Initial pressing] | JVBA-140 | 20,160 | 03-22 |
| Aozora Shoujotai DEFCON Box [Initial pressing] | JVBA-139 | 35,280 | 03-22 |
| Armitage Dual-Matrix | PIBA-1337 | 8,190 | 03-22 |
| Armitage The 3 Poly-Matrix | PIBA-1355 | 3,990 | 03-22 |
| Babel II Vol. 2 | ASBY-2093 | 6,090 | 03-22 |
| Black Jack OVA DVD-Box [Initial pressing] | PIBA-3110 | 26,250 | 03-22 |
| Bremen 4 Jigoku no naka no tenshitachi | PIBA-3105 | 4,935 | 03-22 |
| Fuumoon | PIBA-3104 | 4,935 | 03-22 |
| Ginga Tetsudo no Yoru | AEBA-10101 | 4,935 | 03-22 |
| Gyakuten Ippatsuman DVD-Box 1 [Initial pressing] | PIBA-1320 | 33,600 | 03-22 |
| Hellsing Rescript III | PIBA-1223 | 5,250 | 03-22 |
| Humming Bird Vol.1 / 2 | PIBA-1228/29 | 6,090 | 03-22 |
| I City | PIBA-7114 | 5,040 | 03-22 |
| Karakuri Kengou-den SashiRoad DVD-Box 1 [Initial pressing] | PIBA-1349 | 31,500 | 03-22 |
| Kurenai Sanshiro DVD-Box [Initial pressing] | PIBA-1099 | 31,500 | 03-22 |
| Legend Of Lemnear | PIBA-1310 | 5,040 | 03-22 |
| Marine Express | PIBA-3103 | 4,935 | 03-22 |
| Mizuiro Jidai DVD-Box 1 [Initial pressing] | PIBA-1338 | 27,720 | 03-22 |
| Ninja Senshi Hiei DVD-Box 1 [Initial pressing] | PIBA-1351 | 31,500 | 03-22 |
| Ougon Bad (Golden Bad) DVD-Box Part 2 [Initial pressing] | PIBA-9017 | 31,500 | 03-22 |
| Pachislo Kizoku Gin DVD-Box | PIBA-3126 | 29,400 | 03-22 |
| Reinou Tantei Miko Premium Box [Initial pressing] | PIBA-9018 | 10,290 | 03-22 |
| Roujin to Umi | IMBA-138 | 6,090 | 03-22 |
| Showa Aho soushi Akanuke 1ban DVD-Box [Initial pressing] | PIBA-1322 | 26,250 | 03-22 |
| Super zukan DVD-Box [Initial pressing] | PIBA-7118 | 26,250 | 03-22 |
| Tobira wo Akete | PIBA-7117 | 5,040 | 03-22 |
| Travel the earth for 1,000,000 years - Bander Book | PIBA-3102 | 4,935 | 03-22 |
| Umi no Triton "Original Theatrical Feature" | PIBA-9011 | 6,090 | 03-22 |
| Weiz kreuz Gluhen Special Edition [Initial pressing] | MMBV-1005 | 2,800 | 03-22 |
| Ace wo Nerae (Aim for the Ace) DVD-Box 1 | BCBA-1143 | 17,640 | 03-25 |
| Cosmo Warrior Zero Vol. 6 | BIBA-1876 | 6,090 | 03-25 |
| Figure 17 #7 | BCBA-830 | 6,090 | 03-25 |
| Full Metal Panic Mission 2 [Initial pressing] | BBBA-3052 | 8,190 | 03-25 |
| Gekitou! Crash Gear Turbo 1 | BCBA-1129 | 3,990 | 03-25 |
| Grappler Baki: Saidai Tournament-hen Vol. 9 / 10 | BBBA-1381/82 | 5,250 | 03-25 |
| Jarinko Chie DVD-Box 1 | BCBA-1145 | 17,640 | 03-25 |
| Little Princess | BCBA-758 | 2,940 | 03-25 |
| Magical Nyan Nyan Taruto 4 | BCBA-1003 | 5,250 | 03-25 |
| Mahou-senshi Louie (Louie the Rune Soldier) Vol. 8 | BBBA-1828 | 6,090 | 03-25 |
| Mazinkaizer 4 | BCBA-871 | 2,940 | 03-25 |
| Meitantei Conan (Detective Conan): Part 8 Vol. D1 | BMBD-2017 | 4,410 | 03-25 |
| Rayca | BCBA-1179 | 6,090 | 03-25 |
| Scryed #5 | BCBA-975 | 6,300 | 03-25 |
| Seikai no Senki II Vol.5 | BCBA-1031 | 5,250 | 03-25 |
| Shiawase-sou no Okojosan 1 | BCBA-1167 | 2,100 | 03-25 |
| Tennis no ohjisama Vol.3 | BCBA-1117 | 3,990 | 03-25 |
| The Bush Baby 1 / 2 | BCBA-1095/96 | 3,990 | 03-25 |
| The Tale Of Pollyanna, Girl Of Love | BCBA-759 | 2,940 | 03-25 |
| The Trapp Family Story 1 / 2 | BCBA-1105/06 | 3,990 | 03-25 |
| Watashi no ashinaga ojisan 1 / 2 | BCBA-1085/86 | 3,990 | 03-25 |
| X Vol. 2 | BCBA-1067 | 5,250 | 03-25 |
| You're Under Arrest: Season 2, #9 | BCBA-929 | 6,300 | 03-25 |
| Angelique 1 | KEBH-1016 | 4,935 | 03-27 |
| Beyblade Shoot 10 | KIBA-606 | 5,775 | 03-27 |
| Cyborg 009 [Initial pressing] | AVBA-14296 | 7,350 | 03-27 |
| Da! Da! Da! Step 5 | KIBA-667 | 3,990 | 03-27 |
| Haruka naru toki no naka de -Ajisai yume katari- | KEBH-1014 | 7,140 | 03-27 |
| Hikaru no go 1 | AVBA-14273 | 5,040 | 03-27 |
| Inuyasha 2 no shou Vol. 2 | AVBA-14314 | 6,090 | 03-27 |
| Kaze no Yojimbo Vol. 2 | KIBA-727 | 6,090 | 03-27 |
| Kidou Tenshi Angelic Layer Battle 9 | AVBA-14321 | 6,090 | 03-27 |
| Maho-Yugi 2D Edition (2) | KIBA-693 | 3,990 | 03-27 |
| Muryou 7 | KIBA-631 | 6,279 | 03-27 |
| Muryou 7 [Initial pressing] | KIBA-9631 | 6,279 | 03-27 |
| Sakura Wars: Gekitei Furitsuke | AVBA-14323 | 2,980 | 03-27 |
| Shaman King 6 | KIBA-683 | 4,725 | 03-27 |
| Tantei Kageman (Detective Boy Kageman) Toujou hen 3 | AVBA-14318 | 5,040 | 03-27 |
| Zoids Shin Seiki / Zero Vol. | AVBA-14316 | 6,090 | 03-27 |
| Koukou Tekkenden Tough Round 2 | ACMD-1 | 5,040 | 03-28 |
| I-Wish You Were Here Ep. 2 | ZMBZ-1392 | 6,090 | 03-29 |
| Najika Vol. D5 | ZMBZ-1365 | 6,090 | 03-29 |
| Rahxephon A Prelude | ZMBZ-1400 | 2,625 | 03-29 |
| Shiritsu Araiso Koutougakkou Seitokai Shikkoubu [OVA] Vol. 1 | MABT-7071 | 6,090 | 03-29 |

**Japanese DVD Releases**: This list is not exhaustive. The DVD listed are in Japanese language only and for Zone 2. It shows: title, catalog number, price (¥) and release date. Sources: www.cdjapan.co.jp.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

## FUTURE RELEASES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **May 28** | **Gundress** | **MB** |
| **May 28** | **His & Her Circumstances (Kare Kano)** | **RS** |
| **June 4** | **Betterman** | **B** |
| **June 11** | **Excel Saga** | **ADV** |
| **June 25** | **Armitage Dual Matrix** | **P** |
| **June 25** | **Ghost Sweeper Mikami** | **ME** |
| **July ?** | **Char's CounterAttack (Theatrical)** | **B** |
| **July 23** | **Hellsing** | **P** |
| **Aug. 6** | **Kikaider** | **B** |
| **Aug. 13** | **Strawberry Eggs** | **P** |
| **Sept. 10** | **Initial D** | **TP** |
| **Summer** | **Burn Up Excess** | **ADV** |
| **Fall ?** | **Char's CounterAttack (DVD)** | **B** |
| **Fall** | **Dai Guard** | **ADV** |
| **Fall** | **Dangaizer 3** | **RS** |
| **Fall** | **KO Beast Century** | **RS** |
| **Fall** | **Zone Of the Ender: Idolo (OVA)** | **ADV** |
| **Winter** | **Big O Season 2?** | **??** |
| **Winter** | **Triangle Session** | **ADV** |
| **Winter** | **Wild Arms** | **ADV** |
| **Winter** | **Zone Of the Ender TV Series** | **ADV** |
| 2002 | Colorful | ADV |
| **2002** | **Cowboy Bebop The Movie** | **DF** |
| 2002 | Fancy Lala | B |
| 2002 | JoJo's Bizarre Adventure | STA |
| 2002 | Nadesico Movie: Prince Of Darkness | ADV |
| **2002** | **Sen to Chihiro… (Spirited Away)** | **D** |
| 2002 | Slayers OVAs #2-3 & Movies #2-3 | ADV |
| **2002** | **X TV** | **??** |
| UNKN | Alexander | TP |
| UNKN | Aura Battler Dunbine (!!!) | ADV |
| UNKN | Beyblade | NEL |
| **UNKN** | **Brigadoon: Marin & Meran** | **TP** |
| **UNKN** | **Bt'X** | **ADV** |
| **UNKN** | **Corrector Yui** | **VV** |
| UNKN | Crying Freeman | ADV |
| UNKN | Cutey Honey (new TV series) | ADV |
| UNKN | Dark Millenium | ADV |
| UNKN | Devilman Lady | ADV |
| UNKN | Doomed Megalopolis | ADV |
| UNKN | Dragonball GT | FN |
| UNKN | Eden's Bowy | ADV |
| UNKN | Ellcia Theatrical | ADV |
| **UNKN** | **eX-Driver** | **MB** |
| UNKN | Flare Next | USM |
| **UNKN** | **Fruits Basket** | **FN** |
| **UNKN** | **Full Metal Panic** | **??** |
| UNKN | Fushigi Yugi Gaiden OVA | P |
| UNKN | Geobreeders II | CPM |
| UNKN | G-Gundam | B |
| UNKN | Giant Gorg | B |
| UNKN | Goemon | ADV |
| **UNKN** | **Hamutaro** | **VV** |
| UNKN | Himiko Den | CPM |
| UNKN | Inu Yasha | VV |
| UNKN | Kaidoumaru | ME |
| UNKN | Kazemakase Tsuki Kage Ran | B |
| UNKN | Kiteorama | AW |
| UNKN | Let's Dance With Papa | ADV |
| UNKN | Lupin III (9 other movies) | FN |
| **UNKN** | **Marmalade Boy (TV + Movie)** | **TP** |
| **UNKN** | **Melty Lancer** | **B** |
| UNKN | Mospeada (Sub) | ADV |
| UNKN | Neo Ranga | ADV |
| UNKN | Ninja Resurrection TV | ADV |
| **UNKN** | **Noir** | **ADV?** |
| UNKN | One Piece | 4KIDS? |
| UNKN | Puni Puni Poemi | ADV |
| UNKN | Read Or Die | ME |
| UNKN | Revolutionary Girl Utena Eps. 14-26 | CPM |
| UNKN | Rune Soldier (Mahou Senshi Riui) | ADV |
| UNKN | Rurouni Kenshin (new OVA) | ADV |
| UNKN | Sakura Wars 2 OVA + TV | ADV |
| UNKN | Saiyuki | ADV |
| UNKN | Samurai (The) | ADV |
| UNKN | Southern Cross (Sub) | ADV |
| UNKN | Spectral Force | ADV |
| UNKN | SPT Layzner | B |
| UNKN | Super Milk-chan | ADV |
| UNKN | Ultima Series | ADV |
| UNKN | Urotsukidoji | ADV |
| UNKN | Wonderful | ADV |
| UNKN | Y's 1 & 2 | MB |
| UNKN | Yami no Matsuei (Descendant of Darkness) | CPM |
| UNKN | You're Under Arrest (Movie) (VHS/DVD) | ADV |
| UNKN | Yuki Terai | ADV |

# NORTH AMERICA

**Acquisitions**. It is not really official yet, but it really seems that Disney has acquired the North American rights to Hayao Miyazaki's ***Sen To Chihiro***. Considering the popularity of the movie and the awards it has already gathered, Disney would apparently be working to quickly release the movie to theatres, possible as early as July this year. — Various sources confirmed that the new ***X*** tv series was licensed in North America, but no one is saying which company has acquired the rights. The obvious candidate would be Viz, but, who knows? — **Super Techno Arts**, the US division of Japanese studio A.P.P.P., has cancelled their distribution contract with Digital Manga (Synch-Point) for *Jojo's Bizarre Adventures* and consequently cannot realease the series this summer. The new release date for *Jojo* will be announced at Sakura Con in April along with their new titles. Their web site will also relaunch in April. — **Media Blasters** announced that their label Tokyo Shock has acquired Takashi Ishii's *Freeze Me* and Takashi Miike's *Visitor Q*. Both live action will be released theatrically.

**Columbia Announces Label For Asian Films & Anime**. Columbia Pictures created a new subdivision for distributing their asian titles, including anime: Destination Films. The first title will be anime movie *Metropolis* followed by *Cowboy Bebop: The Movie* later this year. Other confirmed asian titles includes Jackie Chan's *Drunken Master* and *Snake In Eagle's Shadow*, John Woo's *Once A Thief*, Ringo Lam's *Full Contact* and Korean action film *Shiri*. (Source: ANN)

**Conventions: Shoujocon 2002**, a fan-organized convention featuring anime & manga made by women for women, will take place July 19-22 at the East Brunswick Hilton & Towers. For more info: www.shoujocon.com. — **BAAF 2002** (Big Apple Anime Fest) and **AXNY** (Anime Expo New York) will be held jointly at the New York Marriott Marquis on Times Square, New York, from August 31st to September 2nd (Labor Day Weekend), creating a "World Anime Party!" Mike Tatsugawa, of the SPJA, said that AXNY will be a one-shot, or at least a test for the 2003 International Anime Expo. For more info: www.bigappleanimefest.com and www.axny.org. — **Yaoi-Con 2002** will be held at the Holiday Inn Golden Gateway Hotel in the heart of San Francisco, on October 18-20. Guest Of Honor: Nitta Youka. For more info: www.yaoicon.com. (Source: ANN)

**Macross Legal Saga**. A litigation between Tatsunoko Pro and a few creative studios over the ownership of the *Macross* series has recently ended with a Japanese judge ruling in favor of the studios who created the show, Big West and Studio Nue, instead of the production company, Tatsunoko. In the last ten years, such litigation are relatively frequent in the anime industry, with creative studio or authors trying to recover the rights of the shows they have created. This *Macross* litigation created lots of confusion among the North American fans, but both Harmony Gold and AnimEigo have issued statements saying that the ruling was related to issues between Tatsunoko and Big West and that it had nothing to do with, and no effect upon, Harmony Gold or their licenses to *Macross*. (Source: ANN)

**Mari Iijima Goes Back to Japan**. Ms Mari Iijima recently went back to Japan to sing the theme song of the PC game *Galaxy Angel* and to appear on TV. Since she became famous for being the voice of Minmay, the heroine of *Macross*, Ms Iijima has moved to the USA — 17 years-ago already! Ms Iijima has realized that American anime fans are really supporting her, and when she got offer from Mr. Yusuke Sakamoto, the composer/arranger of *Galaxy Angel*, she decided right away to accept singing the theme song. The opening song is for dancing, she feels, so she decided to sing it with passion, while she tried to sing the ending song with love. After a very long absence from Japan, the Diva has returned and Old Macross fans (in Japan) can enjoy again her singing and newcomer fans can discover her! (Source: *Newtype* 03-2002)

**More Gundam On Cartoon Network in 2002!** Apparently both the *Char's CounterAttack* movie and the TV series *G-Gundam* would air on Cartoon Network in 2002. Bandai is also trying to set a limited theatrical release of the *Char's CounterAttack* movie during the summer and tentatively planned the DVD release for Fall (coincidentally, PA#73 will have a large article dedicated to *Char's CounterAttack*). (Source: ANN, Bandai)

**Ninja Scroll Going Live?** Threshold Entertainment has purchased all remake rights to the Japanese 1994 anime block-buster "Ninja Scroll" from Japanese anime studio Madhouse. They plans to turn *Ninja Scroll* into an f/x-driven live-action pic, with a budget in the neighborhood of $60 million. In addition, Threshold will extend the *Ninja Scroll* brand through television, live stage tours, videogames and music. (Sources: Danielle Garnier, *Variety*)

**Notable Books:** *Fushigi Yugi Ultimate Fan Guide* (Guardian Of Order, $24.95, avail. in May), *Cardcaptors Anime Book* Vol. 2-3, *Cowboy Bebop Complete Anime Guide* Vol. 3-4, *Gundam Technical Manual: Gundam Wing* Vol. 2, *Gundam Technical Manual: Stardust Memories* (all from Tokyopop, $12.99, avail. in April or May), and *The Art Of Cardcaptor Sakura* (Tokyopop, $19.99, avail. in May). (Source: *Previews*).

**TokyoPop's Authentic Manga**: Tokyopop proudly announced the first nine titles in its ground-breaking move to give the manga consumer the truest reading experience. Beginning April 2002, look for these authentic manga in their original right-to-left format (at last!!): *Chobits*, *Dragon Knights*, *Cowboy Bebop*, *GTO*, *Mars*, *Marmalade Boy*, *Planet Ladder*, *Real Bout High School*, *The Skull Man*. All titles retail at $9.99 US. (Source: *Previews*).

***Zatoichi* Coming to DVD**. Home Vision Entertainment (Criterion) has announced that it will release on DVD the first two *Zatoichi* samurai films on May 1st. In the second movie, actor Shintaro Katsu faces his real-life brother Tomisaburo Wakayama (who later played Ogami Itto in the *Lone Wolf & Cub* movie series). (Sources: Anime Nation, Anime News Service)

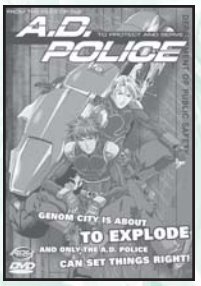
**For more news check www.animenewsnetwork.com!**

News mostly reported by Claude J. Pelletier. ANN = www.animenewsnetwork.com.

Kenyu Destroy Bandai Order #56033683

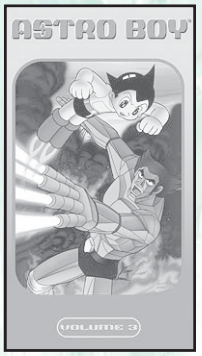
## AD POLICE: TO PROTECT AND SERVE

A.D.Vision, Bilingual DVD, 300 min., $34.98, 12+, avail. on 4-9-02. A sudden rise in VOodoo Organic Metal Extension Resources [VOOMER] incidents has put the A.D. Police in the hot seat. Making matters worse, Kenji Sasaki — one of the A.D. Police's most valuable and unconventional officers has had his share of bad luck. It seems his partners are either turning up dead or seriously injured. Given a new partner, Hans Kleif, and one last chance to redeem himself by playing by the rules, Kenji needs to get to the bottom of this techo-mystery and keep the VOOMERS from turning Genom City into a high-tech wasteland. This two-disc set contains all twelve episodes of the series, featuring 5-hours worth of *AD Police* mayhem!




## ASTRO BOY

Manga Ent., Dubbed VHS, 150/180 min. ea., $19.95 ea., NR (G), Vol. 1-3 (150 min. ea., eps 1-15) avail. on 5-28-02, Vol. 4-6 (180 min. ea., eps 16-33) on 8-27-02 and Vol. 7-9 (180 min. ea., eps 34-51) on 11-26-02. A DVD set will be avail. in 2004. In the U.S., *Astro Boy* first aired on NBC in 1963. In 1983, Tezuka Productions created a higher-quality color version. This updated 51 episode children's series begins with the origin of *Astro Boy*. Broadly speaking, the series conveys a timely message about the triumph of kindness, compassion and selflessness in the face of discrimination and human prejudice – a message Tezuka tries to communicate not only to the children of the world, but also to their parents. The story of *Astro Boy* takes place in April 2030, when a brilliant robotics engineer named Doctor Boynton looses his son Toby in a tragic car accident. Distraught over his death, the dedicated but heart-broken scientist uses his technical expertise to construct a robot in the boy's image. But all was not as he'd hoped, for the scientist soon realized that the robot could never grow into a human being capable of filing the void in his heart. Abandoned to the care of Hamegg – the cruel ringmaster of a carnival where androids are forced to fight each other, Astro Boy is rescued by the kindly Doctor Elefun – an "android's rights" activist who adopts the boy robot and guides him in the use of his special powers to aid and protect mankind.

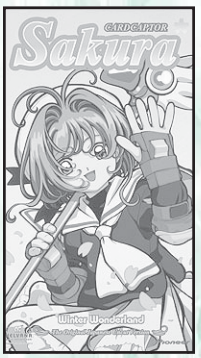



## BLUE GENDER VOL. 3

Funimation, Cat.# FN-05303/FN-05203, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 75 min. (Ep. 7-9), $24.95/$19.95, avail. on 05-07-02. Welcome to the year 2031. Bugs known as "Blue" have inherited the earth, casting humanity to the brink of extinction. Faced with this unstoppable threat, the last vestiges of humanity have abandoned earth and pioneered to the stars, where they train for their inevitable return to earth. To these hardened warriors, Yuji, a "sleeper", is nothing more than a sample of life before the Blue, mere cargo. And Yuji realizes that if he wants to survive and reclaim some part of the world he once knew, he has to fight for it!

## CARDCAPTOR SAKURA VOL. 9: WINTER WONDERLAND

Pioneer, Cat.# 10570/71444, Subtitled DVD/VHS, 75 min., $29.98/$24.98, avail. on 5-14-02. Learning how to ice-skate can be a lot of fun. However, the lesson turns into a crash course when the Freeze Card appears. Later, Sakura and Yukito team up in a city-wide search for clues to a hidden prize that ends up in a death-defying drop! Then the Firey Card attacks and Sakura must learn a new technique with her Clow Cards in order to pull her friends out of the fire!




## GATE KEEPERS VOL. 5: TO THE RESCUE

Pioneer, Cat.# 11616/71718, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 75 min., $29.98/$24.98, 13+, avail. on 5-14-02. The Aegis HQ in New York sends experienced agents to take over the defense of Japan! Immediately, Shun and the other Far East Branch agents protest, but after a near disaster in the field, they are forced to recognize their inexperience. When self-doubt and internal conflicts become more of a threat than the Invaders plans, it's time for action both in the battlefield and in love!

## GOKUDO VOL. 3: GODDESS EXTRAORDINAIRE

Enoki Films, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 100 min., $29.95/$24.95, 13+, avail. on 5-28-02. A great war between the God world, the Magic world and the Buddha world? Not a problem for Gokudo, the greatest adventurer ever to serve himself and save the world. What is a problem, however, is that Gokudo is stuck babysitting the sun goddess, Nano. She's a spoiled brat with unbelievable cosmic powers, and if that combination doesn't give Gokudo a star-sized headache, nothing will. Contains eps 10-13.

## GOLDEN BOY: TREASURE HUNT

ADV Films, Bilingual DVD, 90 min., $29.98, 15+, avail. on 4-23-02. Get ready for the ultimate road trip as wandering student Kintaro Oe hits the highways of Japan in the wildest quest for knowledge ever! Whether he's re-programming the president of an all-female software company, checkmating the malicious daughter of a malevolent politician, or defending the sweet virtue of a noodle maker's daughter, Kintaro's cross-country odyssey is guaranteed to keep your sides aching with laughter! Take a lesson from the Book of Love with Golden Boy: Treasure Hunt. The first of two volumes collects the first three episodes of the popular anime comedy.

## GTO (GREAT TEACHER ONIZUKA), VOL. 2: THE BULLY

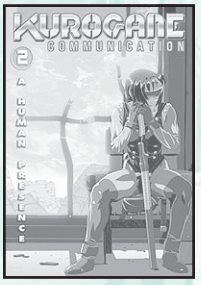
Tokyopop, Bilingual DVD, 125 min., $29.98, 16+, avail. on 4-23-02. GTO is the racy story of Onizuka, a former motorcycle gang member who becomes a teacher to make a difference and…to meet girls? Using his street smarts to deal with colleagues, students and troublemakers, Onizuka finds that he too has many lessons to learn! This volume contains five complete episodes: Lesson 5: "An Eye For An Eye, A Butt For A Butt", Lesson 6: "Conspiracies All Around", Lesson 7: "The Mother Of All Crushes", Lesson 8: "Bungee Jumping Made Easy", and Lesson 9: "Onizuka And The Art Of War."

## HIS AND HER CIRCUMSTANCES Vol. 1

Right Stuf, Cat.# RSDVD8011, Bilingual DVD, 180 min., $29.95, 13+, avail. on 5-28-02. From Gainax, with production by Toshimichi Otsuki (*Evangelion*, *Slayers*, *Nadesico*), chief direction and story by Hideaki Anno (*Evangelion*) and character design by Tadashi Hiramatsu (*Evangelion*) comes this very expected High School Drama. Pressure is high for Yukino Miyazawa to succeed, to be loved by all, and to be simply... the best. After working so hard to become the top student at her school, a new competitor has arrived to tumble her from her self made pedestal: Arima Souichirou. The instant she met him, she hated him. He topped her every effort without even trying. Now Yukino is putting her hard work into plotting her revenge, but was love part of the plan? Contains episodes 1-6. Bonus content includes: storyboards, production notes, translation notes, character biographies, and more! Also avail. with the Artbox for $39.95.

## KUROGANE COMMUNICATION VOL. 2: A HUMAN PRESENCE

Anime Works, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 100 min. (Eps 9-16), $24.95/$19.95, avail. on 4-30-02. The climate of earth has changed for the worse since the great war. Haruka and her robot companions are on the run from a colossal tsunami, and only a recently uncovered spacecraft provides an escape from the oncoming threat. During the escape, forgotten secrets of Haruka's parents resurface, testing her resolve. She is tempted to abandon the others, and return to the arms of her parents forever.

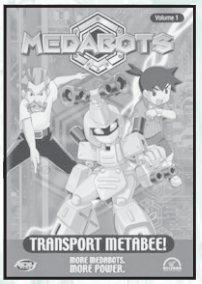



The "New Releases" section contains promotional material produced by the anime releasers or from Diamond's *Previews*. For reviews, see "Anime Review" section at the end of the magazine.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

## LOVE HINA VOL. 3: SECRET LIVES

Bandai, Cat.# 1902, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+, avail. on 6-18-02. A thief has stolen the rent money of Hinata Inn and everyone panics. Meanwhile, a mysterious woman appears in Hinata with her pet alligator, wrecking havoc all across town! Then, Naru becomes a celebrity idol, which leads to Keitaro worrying about her studies. And, when Motoko runs out of clean clothes, she's forced to wear a dress! Furthermore, her swordsmanship has been foiled by not only Tama-chan but also Keitaro! Plus, Shinobu quests for her first kiss.




## LUPIN THE 3RD VOL. 1: SECRET OF THE TWILIGHT GEMINI

Funimation, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 90 min., $24.95/$19.95, 13+, avail. on 4-30-02. The classic gentleman thief Lupin III and his cohorts, the sharp-shooter Jigen, the samurai Goemon and the buxom Fujiko journey to Morocco and the deserts of Arabia in search of a legendary diamond called the "Twilight Gemini," the key to a vast hidden Celtic treasure left by an ancient clan a century ago. But, of course, they're not alone in their search. The tireless Inspector Zenigata is hot on their heels, a mysterious and beautiful desert gypsy is also in search of the treasure, and a ruthless mystery organization wants both the treasure and Lupin's head! Originally titled *Legend of the Twilight Gemini,* this movie, directed by Gizaburo Sugii (Street Fighter II movie and Night on the Galactic Railroad) and featuring memorable theme songs by fan favorite voice actress and singer Aya Hisakawa, is a prime example of why *Lupin III* has remained one of Japan's favorite anime characters for 30 years!

## MAGIC USERS CLUB TV VOL. 4: SHOULD I DO

Anime Works, Bilingual DVD (Dubbed/Subtitled VHS), 75 min. (Eps 11-13), $24.95 ($19.95), 13+, avail. on 4-30-02. Jinno has become a member of the Magic User's Club, and he wastes no time making himself at home, quickly gaining the confidence of each member, and confronting Nanaka, Aburatsubo and Takeo about their unrequited loves. Akane may not have such feelings, but when Jinno works his magic on her own confused and selfish desires, things really get out of hand. The entire club must overcome their confusion and join forces, before Akane's wild magic threatens the entire city of Tokyo!

## MEDABOTS: TRANSPORT METABEE!

ADV Films, Dubbed DVD/VHS, 125 min., $19.98/$14.98, Rated for All, avail. on 4-30-02. Ten-year old Ikki has one wish: to show off his Medabilities by representing his country in the World Robattle Tournament. Unfortunately, Ikki doesn't have a Medabot of his own, so all he can do is dream of one day becoming a top-notch Medafighter. But when Ikki stumbles across a Rare Medal, the key to every Medabot's soul, the chance to become a part of this super-charged world of high performance fighting robots suddenly becomes a reality. Will Ikki scrape together enough money to build his own pet Medabot, or will his dreams of glory go unfulfilled? Find out in the first exciting volume of Medabots! Includes the first five episodes of the highly-rated children's television series from FOX Kids. DVD extras include character bios, a Medabots A to Z special feature, and ADV previews.

## MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM 0083 : STARDUST MEMORY, VOL. 3

Bandai, Cat.# 0367, Bilingual DVD, 75 min., $29.98, 13+, avail. on 5-21-02. As the Earth Federation's space fleet begins its naval review, the remnants of the Duchy of Zeon carry out their secret plan of vengeance. Will Kou Uraki's newfound confidence and upgraded Gundam enable him to stop Anavel Gato's nuclear strike? Now begins the ultimate battle of Gundam against Gundam!

## MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM VOL. 10: LALAH'S FATE

Bandai, Cat#1779/1769, Dubbed DVD/VHS, 100 min., $24.98/$14.98, 16+, avail. on 6-4-02. With the conflict's end in sight, the Earth Federation prepares to take the war into the Duchy of Zeon's home territory. Gundam pilot Amuro Ray, now a seasoned veteran, returns to space for the final battle. Along with the mysterious Lalah Sune, the final clash between Newtypes are at hand, while the fate of two intertwined enemies collide with tragic consequences! Contains eps 40-43.

## NADIA SECRET OF THE BLUE WATER VOL. 8: THE SECRET CAVE

A.D. Vision, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 100 min., $29.98/$19.98, 12+, avail. on 4-23-02. Nadia, Jean and the rest have gathered together on this beautiful, yet mysterious island in the South Pacific. However, it is not all paradise, and when our young hero and heroine venture deep into the heart of the island, their entire world is turned upside down. Now it's a race to get off the island before all is lost and destiny claims a life.

## NEON GENESIS EVANGELION PERFECT COLLECTION

ADV Films, Multilingual DVD, 650 Min., $169.98, 12+, avail on 4-9-02. At the turn of the century, the Angels returned to Earth, seeking to wipe out humanity in an apocalyptic fury. Devastated, mankind's last remnants moved underground to wait for the day when the Angels would come back to finish the job. Fifteen years later, that day has come...but this time, humanity is ready to fight back with terrifying bio-mechanical weapons known as the Evangelions. Watch as Shinji, Rei, Asuka and the rest of the mysterious shadow agency Nerv battle to save earth from total annihilation. This special collector's edition package contains eight DVD volumes (including a newly remastered volume one) in the English language version, along with the Japanese, Spanish, and French versions with English subtitles.

## NOW & THEN, HERE & THERE, VOL. 3: CONFLICT & CHAOS

U.S. Manga Corp., Cat.# USM-2150/2121, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 75 min., $29.99/$19.99, 16+, avail. on 5-14-02. The desert explodes in an all-out war as a tyrant unleashes a flying battleship against a rebel army. Guns blaze and lives are lost in the devastation. No one will be left unscarred, or innocent. Young Shu, searching the wreckage for a captured friend, is swept into the battle fray. It's the ultimate challenge of survival in a world gone mad! Also available in a Box Set (DVD/VHS, USM-2169/2210, $89.99/$59.99).

## ORPHEN VOL. 5: THE SOUL STEALERS

A.D. Vision, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 125 min., $29.98/$19.98, 12+, avail. in May. When she arrives at the mysterious Summit of Moonlight, Azalie devises a sinister plan. And when the devious magician Flameheart makes his move, Orphen's teacher finds himself the unwitting victim of them both! Orphen's last hope to change the dragon Azalie back into a human is to find the legendary magician Rox Roe, the only one who knows the spell to transform her.

## PILOT CANDIDATE VOL. 4

Bandai, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. (Eps 10-12), $24.98, 13+, avail. on 5-21-02. The planet Zion is besieged by the legions of Victim intent on destroying humanity! Five humanoid fighting weapons called Ingrids are capable of stopping Victim's onslaught, but only the best pilots are chosen. The final fate of Zion now rests with these chosen few in the conclusion to *Pilot Candidate*!

## POKEMON: JOHTO JOURNEYS

Viz, Cat.# PK-051, Dubbed VHS/Bilingual DVD, 70 min. ea., $14.98/$24.98 ea, 3+, avail. on 03-26-02. **Vol. 51: Ursaring Rampage**. Ash's Totodile falls for a singing Azumarill, but Totodile's dancing fails to impress the cuddly Aquarabbit Pokemon. Next, Ash tries to capture a rare Noctowl, but constantly gets outsmarted! While Pokemon outsmarting Ash is no surprise, everyone is in for a shock when a thundering herd of Ursaring forces Jessie to team-up with Ash and Misty to join Team Rocket! Will anything ever be the same?

Kenyu Desktop Bandai Order #35033683

## POWER STONE

ADV Films, Dubbed DVD, 100 (Vol. 4-5)/125 min., $19.98, 12+, avail. on 4-9-02, 5-21-02 & 7-2-02. **Vol. 4: The Search Continues**. As the quest for the enigmatic Power Stones continues, young adventurer Edward Falcon arrives in the castle town of Moon Land, only to find the once flowering city ravaged by drought. The drought isn't natural, however — it's supernatural — and caused by a very dangerous enemy! Then, Falcon and his comrades-in-arms must conquer a giant glacier as they continue their search for Edward's father in Soil Land. Things look pretty grim for our heroes! Contains episodes 14-17. **Vol. 5: Friends & Enemies**. When young adventurer Edward Falcon discovers Dulustown is under attack by powerful Indians, he has no choice but to use his Power Stones to save the troubled town. But when Falcon and his companions arrive in Aqua Land, they discover angry attackers are nothing compared to the devilish plot of the pirate Kraken! And things get even more mysterious as Falcon discovers his idol – the fearsome fighter, Valgas – in the midst of a heated battle. But is Valgas friend? Or foe? **Vol. 6: The Last Battlefield**. When two of the mysterious and magical Power Stones are stolen, young adventurer Edward Falcon sets out to warn his friends Wang Tang and Gunrock. His warning arrives too late, however, as dark hands of magic are already circling around our intrepid heroes. Mysterious apparitions begin to attack Edward and his friends-monsters that somehow seem connected to his idol, the fighter Valgas. Then, Edward discovers the terrible secret behind his enemies' acquisition of the Power Stones — and you can bet it won't be welcome news. Finally, in the terrifying Dark Land, Edward and his combative cohorts are confronted with the supreme evil incarnate. You won't believe how this one ends! Don't miss a single second of the thrilling conclusion of *Power Stone*!

## PRINCESS NINE VOL. 4: STRIKE ZONE

A.D. Vision, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $19.98, 12+, avail. in May. Just when it looked like the Princesses were on the verge of being accepted, a maelstrom of tragedies tear the team asunder! As the Parent's association attempts to shut down the baseball program, Yoko and Kanako are pulled from the team and the revelation of the secrets in Ryo's past leave the young pitcher devastated and alone. Will the sins of the father drive Ryo to the edge of destruction?

## PSYCHIC FORCE

Image, Subtitled DVD, 64 min., $24.99, avail. in May. Rapid changes in the new century have brought forth a dangerous power capable of good or evil. Harnessing the psychic abilities of its residents, the government has turned its most gifted citizens into New Age guinea pigs, drained of their essence and discarded after serving their purpose. Loaded with action-packed excitement, startling cutting-edge visuals, and memorable characters, Psychic Force propels you into a dynamic new world where one mind in the wrong hands can be explosive!

## RANMA 1/2 : RANMA FOREVER VOL. 1 : INITIATION NITE

Viz Video, Cat.# DRRF01/VRRF01, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 78 min., $24.98/$19.98, 13+, avail. on 6-11-02. The final TV Season of *Ranma 1/2*! Three new episodes await, beginning "Tatewaki Kuno, Substitute Principal," in which the principal is off on an inspection tour and he's put his 17-year-old son, Tatewaki Kuno, in charge. As they say, the coco-nutcase never falls far from the tree. In "Ranma's Greatest Challenge!?", Ranma is told the Tendo Dojo will lose its successor if he doesn't win, so Ranma trains hard for an upcoming contest. But "kick-the-can" may be just another way to say "kick-the-Ranma!" It's really just thuggery, Tendo Dojo-style. Then, in "Nihao! Jusenkyo Guide," he claims he's on a sightseeing tour, but surely the Jusenkyo Guide hasn't come all the way from China just for that. Could his surprise visit have something to do with Ranma and Genma's mishap at Jusenkyo Spring?

## RANMA 1/2: ANYTHING GOES MARTIAL ARTS DVD BOX SET

Viz, Cat.# DRTV2BS, Bilingual DVDs, 550 min., $119.98, avail. on 4-9-02. This second box set of Ranma 1/2 episodes continues the zany adventures of gender-changing martial artist Ranma Saotome from the first television series, collecting all 22 episodes of *Ranma 1/2: Anything Goes Martial Arts* in DVD format! In this box set: a figure-skating champion who will stop at nothing to take P-Chan; the Martial Arts Restaurant race begins; the dreaded secret of the "Cat Fist" technique; and many more wacky stories!

## REAL BOUT HIGH SCHOOL VOL. 1: ENTER THE SAMURAI GIRL

Tokyopop, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 16+, avail. on 5-21-02. At Daimon High, where martial arts are standard curriculum and disputes are settled by officially recognized duels, Ryoko Mitsurugi takes on all comers. But this high school girl is in for the fight of her life when she is transported to an alternate dimension and must defeat a myriad of evil adversaries. Hot off the airwaves of Japan, the 100% digital animation is produced by Gonzo, the studio behind *Vandread*, *Blue Submarine No. 6*, and *Gate Keepers*.

## RONIN WARRIORS

Bandai, Cat.# 1950/51/52/53, Bilingual DVDs Dual side, 100 min. ea (x2), $24.98 ea, avail. on 04-23-02, 5-21-02, 6-4-02 & 7-23-02. **Vol. 1 : The Call**. Originally titled *Yoroiden Samurai Troopers*, *Ronin Warriors* introduces Talpa, ruler of the Netherworld, returning to claim the Earth as his own after a thousand years of exile. The only thing standing in the way of world domination are five young men and their mystical suits of armor. Calling on the spirits of ancient Samurai Warriors and granted super-powered fighting skills and weapons to wield against this tyranny, these reluctant heroes must find the strength and courage within themselves in this struggle between Good and Evil, with the fate of Humanity hanging in the balance! **Vol. 2 : Rescue Operation**. After a fierce battle, the Ronin Warriors have been scattered across Japan. It is up to the remaining warrior, Ryo, to track down and revive the others before it's too late. But Arago's not taking any chances, and he sends his Warlords to block the path at every turn. Ryo will have to work fast if he's going to stand a chance against Arago and save his comrades. **Vol. 3: Warriors Reunited!** Ryo has succeeded in reviving the other Warriors, and now, they return to make their first assault on Talpa's castle! But reaching the source of the evil is not going to be an easy task, as they now must fight in Talpa's realm, and he has the home court advantage. **Vol. 4: The Shadow Of Doom**. The Warriors have begun their assault on the castle, but without a strategy, how can they possibly meet with success? Meanwhile, the evil Talpa, having separated them, begins to plant seeds of doubt into the minds of the warriors about their armor. And one of Talpa's men begins to doubt his master's cause. Is it possible for a warrior of Talpa's to join the forces of good? Four complete, uncut Japanese language episodes of *Legendary Armor Samurai Troopers* on one side and four complete, uncut English language episodes of *Ronin Warriors* on the other for a total of eight episodes!

## RUROUNI KENSHIN

Anime Works, Bilingual DVD (Dubbed/Subtitled VHS), 100 min. ea, $29.95 ea ($24.95 ea), 13+, avail. on 4-30-02 & 5-28-02. **Vol. 17: Holy War** (Eps.71-74). Amakusa Shougo took up the mantle of divinity after witnessing the murder of his mother. Calling himself the Son of God, he surrounds himself with an army of the faithful and starts his own revolution. As Kenshin lies blinded by Shougo's Rai Ryu Sen, Sanosuke ends up rescuing a spiritual woman known as Magdaria. The war then turns doubly deadly as one of the faithful plans to make Shougo a martyr like his namesake. Despite his affliction, Kenshin must fight to end this new revolution before Shougo is crucified! **Vol. 18: Fall From Grace** (Eps 75-78). The Christian Saga thunders to a close as the army and Shougo's followers meet on the battlefield. Elsten manages to arrange a truce for one hour, while Kenshin and Shougo, both weary and wounded, fight to decide the outcome for every soldier. Will either Hiten Mitsurugi master be able to pull off the ultimate attack of their style, the Amakakeru Ryu no Hirameki?

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

## SABER MARIONETTE J TO X

Bandai, Cat.# 0490/91V, Bilingual DVD, 125 min. ea, $29.98 ea, 13+, avail. on 04-23-02 & 6-18-02. **Vol. 1.** The long awaited sequel to the popular Saber Marionette J series has arrived! Lorelei has been saved and the female clones are about to visit Japoness for the very first time! Otaru and friends have finally achieved peace and prosperity… or have they? The maiden circuits within Lime, Cherry, and Bloodberry have continued to grow since their last battle! Overwhelmed by emotions granted through the circuit, our friends are now able to experience a multitude of emotions, but can they endure these new feelings while facing a new enemy? **Vol. 2: Program 2**. Bloodberry, disappointed after a date with Otaru, goes awry and joins the circus! Meanwhile, Lime meets a fairy, but when she tries to introduce her new friend to Otaru and Company, no one believes her! And finally, Otaru and the Marionettes decide to sneak Lorelei out of the castle for a small outing, but things don't go as planned when Lorelei vanishes and a new enemy appears!

## SAILOR MOON

A.D. Vision, Cat.# VMN-019/20, Dubbed VHS, 90 min. ea / 115 min. ea (Ep. 19-20), $12.98 ea, G, avail. in March. **Vol. 19: Time Travelers**. As the Negamoon's attacks on the city continue, Rini comes to a decision. The time has come for her to lead Sailor Moon and the Sailor Scouts back into the future Crystal Tokyo to confront the evil Prince Diamond and his Dark Crystal! But first the Sailor Scouts must find there way through the dimensions of time and space in their greatest challenge yet. Contains five complete episodes! **Vol. 20: Love Conquers All**. At long last, Sailor Moon and the Sailor Scouts have arrived in the future, but now they're faced with their greatest challenge ever! Rini's been taken over by the Nega-moon, the future city's been devastated and Serena's future self lays trapped inside a giant crystal! Can even the champions of love defeat the evil power of the Dark Crystal? Find out the answer in the 20th and final volume of the original Sailor Moon! Contains five complete episodes!

## SINS OF THE SISTERS

U.S. Manga Corps, Cat.# USM-2074, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.99, 16+, avail. on 4-9-02. 1212 AD. During the crusades, an innocent soldier finds himself betrayed, and leaps to his death, vowing to return as a fallen angel. In present day, he is reborn as a woman named Aiko, the military leader of a new crusade, successfully uniting the world and abolishing all religion. Haunted by memories of a past life, Aiko travels backwards in time, and finds herself caught in an incredible battle to save the future.

## SOUL HUNTER VOL. 4: GAME OF KINGS

A.D. Vision, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 12+, avail. on 5-7-02. With the young princes away on Mount Kunlun, it seems the Yin Dynasty may be finished for good. Taikoubou and Lord Ki Shou must forge a new order before the entire nation collapses into chaos and anarchy. Meanwhile, foreseeing an impending conflict with the armies of the West, Bunchu sends his four most trusted minions to crush Ki Shou and his allies. Bunchu's Shisei are dangerous immortals with fantastic powers over earth, water and light. Without the backup of the Western military, nothing stands between the Shisei and the destruction of the West... nothing except Taikoubou and his rag-tag crew of allies!

## SPRIGGAN

A.D. Vision, Cat.# DSP001, Bilingual DVD, 90 min., $29.98, Rated R, avail. on 4-23-02. A mythical, biblical power on the verge of discovery! A secret cabal with visions of global domination! A young warrior fighting for the future of mankind as he wrestles with the ghosts of his shrouded past! All these elements collide with deadly ferocity in *Spriggan*! Produced and directed by the visionary wizardry of Katsuhiro Otomo and Hirotsugu Kawasaki (*Akira*, *Perfect Blue*), with chief character designs and primary animation overseen by Hisachi Eguchi (*Perfect Blue*), *Spriggan* is a visual landmark in animation and design, showcasing arguably the most gorgeous animation ever created from Japan!

## STEEL ANGEL KURUMI: ANGEL ON MY SHOULDER

A.D. Vision, Bilingual DVD, 90 min., $29.98, 17+, 5-21-02. Designed by a brilliant mind, using otherworldly technology, bred for military use, the Steel Angel's intent was as revolutionary as it was mysterious. But when a young boy accidentally awakens the Steel Angel Kurumi, science and strategy are thrown a curve. Now this multi-million dollar soldier is taking orders from a boy, and other forces are not happy about it. So Kurumi and her young master must seek out a secret lab and discover dangerous answers.

## VANDREAD VOL. 3: GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Pioneer, Cat.# 11705/71797, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 75 min., $29.98/$24.98, 13+, avail. on 5-14-02. As if running from dangerous aliens wasn't hard enough, Hibiki makes an enemy out of Rabat, a trouble-making peddler with an unhealthy interest in Drita and the Vandread. Then, the Nirvana discovers a stranded human colony that awaits the prophesized "Munya." When the aliens attack, Hibiki and Jura finally combine to form a Vandread! Finally, Christmas arrives on the Nirvana, but can you still have a white Christmas in space?

## VANILLA SERIES (THE)

Critical Mass, Cat.# CMDVD6980/81 (CM6924/25/27), Bilingual DVD (Dubbed VHS), 60 min. ea, $24.95 ea ($19.98 ea), 18+, avail. on 3-26-02 & 4-30-02 (Meiking Vol. 1) and 5-28-02 (Meiking Vol. 2 & DVD). **Bondage Mansion** It began as a game… or at least, as a competition. Reika Mimura came from a wealthy family and never wanted for anything. Then, her uncle died and left her with a single unusual wish: find a previously unknown cousin and allow him to live in the family home with her. Her cousin, though, has other ideas. Reika is woefully unaware of her family history: while she is a normal girl interested in sex like anyone else, her family has for years practiced dominion over its women. This puts her in the middle of a bizarre ritual between her current boyfriend and her sadistic cousin: the one who breaks her is the one who gets the house and the money. Certainly Reika had no idea what her uncle had in store for her. The beginning of a new set of fantasy erotic anime in the tradition of *Cool Devices*, the *Vanilla Series* presents disparate themes of erotica by various authors and artists which will take your breath away... **Meiking**. Blame it on the sheep. Cain Asbell was an unremarkable guy until one of his stray sheep led him into a cave with a trapped fairy named Elise. In a blink of an eye Cain goes from pauper to lord when Elise helps him rescue the Princess Charlotte. There's just one hitch. Cain has to make his land the most prosperous in the country within 5 years. Should he fail, he'll lose everything and return to being another lowly shepherd. But if he manages to succeed, Cain will gain the Princess Charlotte's hand in marriage! Sounds easy? Not if everyone in your kingdom is out to take advantage of your young age. Between slavers and bandits it's amazing Cain's still alive. But being a lord isn't all bad — he has the right to choose any woman he wants to go to bed with him... While Cain is busy acquainting himself with the pleasures of becoming a lord and learning to rule fairly, his competitors are already stirring against him.

## YU YU HAKUSHO VOL. 1-2

Funimation, Bilingual DVD/Dubbed VHS, 80 min., $24.95/$19.95, 13+, avail. on 4-16-02. 14-year-old Yusuke is a troubled teen with psychic abilities and a detective's approach to puzzling situations. Teaming up with "Death", two demons, and his former rival, this psychic investigator fends off the evil spirits seeking to consume the world.

Kenyn Brown-Bardell (Order #35033683)

# HEAVY GEAR (TV SERIES): OVERVIEW

⚠ SPOILER AHEAD ⚠

In the last twenty years, it has been the dream of many North American entertainment companies to duplicate the often enormous success Japanese "Giant Robot" animations have had on the Occidental market. Shows like *Goldorak* (the French version of Go Nagai's *UFO Robot Grendizer* ), *Robotech* , *Transformers* and more recently, *Mobile Suit Gundam Wing* and *The Big-O* , have helped shape what could be considered today a rather lucrative market based on "Giant Robots" shows. One of the companies that have succeeded in producing their own brand of anime-like material for the Occidental market is Dream Pod 9, a Canadian gaming company whose members have been influenced by the Japanese way of doing things (some of these people participated in the now deceased *Mecha Press*, the very first Japanese mecha-oriented magazine in the Occidental market) as far as designs and stories are concerned. Of their two most successful titles, the gritty *Heavy Gear* (the other being the more *Mobile Suit Gundam* -like *Jovian Chronicles* ) has been noticed enough to become an animated TV series, produced by Sony Pictures Entertainment (*Roughnecks: Starship Troopers Chronicles*, *Max Steel* ) and Mainframe Entertainment (who worked on *ReBoot*, *Transformers: Beast Wars*, *Shadow Raiders*, *Action Man* ).

The *Heavy Gear* Role-Playing game and Video games, as well as the animated TV series (even if the world of the TV series is not as well developed and gritty as the games'), take place in the sixth Millennium, on Terra Nova, a planet settled, then abandoned, by the Earth thousands of years earlier. Now the population of Terra Nova is thriving, even after the Interpolar War (the planet is separated into three well separated zones: North, South and the Equatorial band, known as the Badlands) and an attempt by the Earth government to reconquer the planet. Of course, such a population has to be entertained and one of the games most popular on Terra Nova at this moment is the Heavy Gear Championship Tournament, an event similar to our WWF™ wrestling, but with giant humanoid machines known as Heavy Gears (or HG or, more simply, Gears).

The story of the *Heavy Gear* animated TV series revolves around the rivalry between young Marcus Steven Rover of the Southern Shadow Dragons and Major Drake Alexander Wallis III, leader of the Northern Vanguard Of Justice and 9 times Heavy Gear Champion. The Dragons and the Vanguard being the best Heavy Gear Championship teams of the their respective hemispheres. While the South's Shadow Dragons are the good guys and are pretty much playing by the rules, the North's Vanguard Of Justice is seemingly composed of seedy characters, quick to use their dirtiest tricks to win (which is somewhat strange, since many of the Role-Playing Games' players prefer the North). When Wallis looses his title to newcomer Marcus, the Vanguard are even more prone to try to fudge the dice...

Of course, since *Heavy Gear* was created by a Canadian company AND was, in good part, inspired by Japanese animation, we were anxious to see it for ourselves. We must say that the results are somewhat mixed. Let us explain why. First, the 3D computer animation, done by Mainframe Entertainment , is not bad at all. The textures are nicely done and the Gears' movements are really impressive. However, the characters are still so-so, but we believe this is more the result of lack of time and budget per episode than anything else (when given enough time and budget, you get results like *Final Fantasy* ...), something even standard animation has trouble dealing with. Moreover, in this show, the Gears are more important than the characters, so...

However, the real problem with the series is the somewhat repetitive and childish plot. While the world described in the games is a very rich and well developed universe (the *Heavy Gear* Role-Playing Game has over 50 books published so far) whose maturity has attracted many players, the TV series seems to have been designed to cater to a much younger, less sophisticated audience. Even then, this does not excuse the weaknesses of the repetitive scenarios, especially given the wealth of information that was available to the writers (and the example of the Japanese shows they had certainly seen on American TV). The series also lacks a conductive element, something that will make the audience want to see the next episode. A "shtick", as some would say. A good example of what we are talking about is episode #25 "The Zero Racer". It would have been really cool to have this mecha and its mysterious pilot as recurring characters, especially if the pilot would have been somewhat involved with Marcus in some way (his father or a young female pilot, etc.). That would have given the episodes a conductive link that is pretty much missing here... But there is also a positive side to the show's simplicity: it is easily accessible and its similarity to WWF™ wrestling, one of the most popular entertainment ever devised by man, gives the show a greater visibility and the chance to reach a larger audience.

All in all, here are our prognostics. On the positive side, the 3D animation is nicely done, the mechanical designs are really cool and the story is simple, to the point and easily accessible to all ages (but it's mostly aimed at kids). On the negative side, the character designs are so-so and nearly all the things that made *Heavy Gear* such a great role-playing game are gone. In short, if you are looking to be entertained, this is a good show for you, but if you are looking for something deep and meaningful, well...

**News Flash!**: The first DVDs of the series are on the way. The first one should be released in the summer of 2002. Also, if you like highly detailed metal miniatures, the *Heavy Gear* miniature series has more than 58 figures in its lineup, ranging from Gears to Tanks, Striders and infantry. Have fun!

| Designs: **3.5** | Animation: **4** | Soundtrack: **2.5** | Story: **2.5** | Translation: **—** | Average: **3** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

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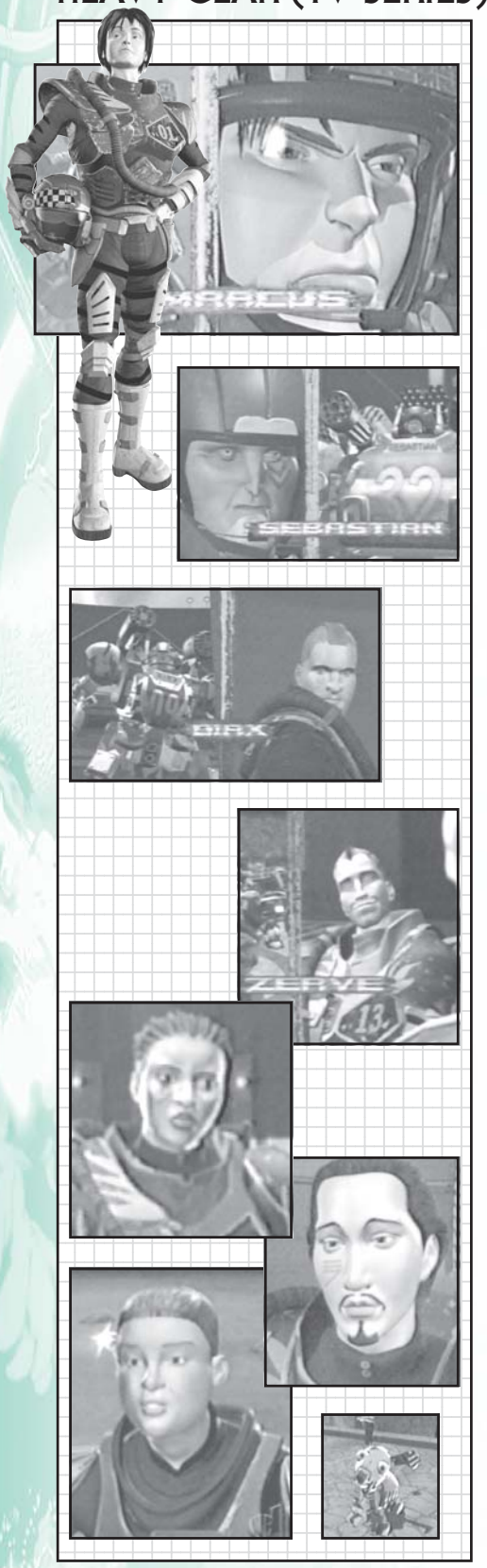
Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# HEAVY GEAR (TV SERIES): CHARACTER PROFILES




## *The "Good Guys"*

### Marcus Steven Rover

Marcus is the latest addition to the Shadow Dragons, the South's best HG dueling team. However, as young as he is (20 Cycles, about 15 years-old), his seat-of-the-pants Gear pilot abilities are such that he has quickly earned his comrades' respect. A fast learner with lightning quick reflexes and a master of unconventional HG combat tactics, Marcus also has some quirks: overconfidence and a total disrespect for discipline, two things that sometimes put him in rather dangerous situations. Having replaced Lt. Jan Augusta, his childhood hero, in the Shadow Dragons, Marcus has inherited two things from the retired ace Duelist: his Command Jäger (renamed "Red Rover") and the enmity of Major Drake Alexander Wallis III, the fearsome leader of the North's Vanguard Of Justice HG Dueling team, the ultimate masters of dirty tricks in the HG circuit. Marcus better watch his back...

### Sebastian

Sebastian is a GREL (Genetically Recombined Experimental Legionnaire), a Supersoldier created by the Earth Forces for the war against Terra Nova and abandoned by them when they lost the war. A huge man with fantastic strength, reflexes and stamina, Sebastian is, thanks to his Jan-class genes (officers), much more independent and capable of interaction with other people than your usual, run-of-the-mill GREL. However, he still finds it difficult to "hang loose" and some of his attempts make him comical. Of all the Shadow Dragons, Sebastian seems to be the closest to Marcus. He pilots a King Cobra HG, named "Warhawk".

### Dirx

If you want to be told the truth with no cute pink bows on it, Dirx is your man. Loud, brash and totally lacking in social graces, this is the guy your mother did not want you hanging around with. However, Dirx has great perks for a HG Duelist: fiercely loyal to his comrades, fast on the trigger and an imaginative, relentless adversary. The word "retreat" is NOT in this man's vocabulary. Although Zerve's good friend, Dirx does not share his "positive waves" perspective on life and makes it quite clear. His negative attitude is sometimes bothering to the others, but they do rely on him. He pilots an Armored Jäger, named "Buzzwomp".

### Zerve

How this New Age Guru type found his way into the Shadow Dragons is beyond us (and probably beyond them as well!). This guy is Dirx's antithesis: all calm, charming and flowwwiiing with positive waves. However, do not be fooled by his laid back attitude; Zerve CAN take on the most fearsome adversary and make them run for cover. Like Marcus, he has more than a certain liking for offbeat tactics and will use them to his full advantage. The Vanguard's dirty tricks seem to amuse him (dispersing those negative waves is so fun!). Zerve pilots a Desert Jäger, named "Crush Bucket".

### Sonja Briggs

Continuing the Shadow Dragons' tradition of offbeat characters, Sonja was a Gear Racer before entering the world of HG Dueling. Graced with great patience and incredible reflexes sharpened by years of racing at breakneck speeds, she is one of the most dangerous pilots around, often poping up in front of her adversary to fire a devastating shot, then fading like a ghost. Sonja pilots "Sweet Venom", a Long Bow Blitz Jäger.

### Kusunoki Tachi

Tachi is the Shadow Dragons' hand-to-hand HG combat expert. While excellent in standard HG combat, he is at his best when wielding the huge Vibro-Katana that has been passed on for generations in his family. While seemingly calm and reserved, he is a fierce and relentless adversary and can pull off maneuvers only a chosen few can even dream of ever being able of achieve. Serge Garpenlov of the Vanguard will certainly remember the cost of stealing Tachi's beloved Vibro-Katana... Tachi's machine is a Rattlesnake HG, named "Bonzai Basher".

### Budd Squires

Although not a Duelist, Budd, as their mechanic and parts supplier, is an important part of the Shadow Dragons. Marcus may be very good at tinkering around the Gears, but Budd is a genius at it and often comes up with jury-rigged repairs that save the Dragons' butt. Between matches, Budd pilots the clown Gear named "Rex Aplenty" and entertains the audience. Budd has a robotic dog called Buttons...

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# HEAVY GEAR (TV SERIES): CHARACTER PROFILES (Continued)

## *The "Bad Guys"*

### Drake Alexander Wallis III

Wallis is the leader of the Vanguard Of Justice (what a tacky name!) and once was the Heavy Gear Champion. We say "once was" because Marcus has taken that title from him and this is not something Wallis will easily forget nor forgive. Born to a wealthy Northern family with a long tradition of military service, Major Wallis had a distinguished career in the Northern military, whose code of honour and discipline he cherished and had made his own. However, Marcus taking his hard won title from him has made Wallis forget (nearly) everything about these things he so believed in. Pushed by Magnilda Rika, the Vanguard's true Commander, Wallis is now driven by his need to regain his title at any cost, even if it means resorting to dirty tricks to do so. Wallis Gear is a modified Grizzly, named "King Of Sting".

### Rank

The character everybody loves to hate! A consummate bully with a VERY short fuse, Rank loves nothing more than pound his adversary into scrap metal and then laugh at them. However (and this is a big "however"), as good as he is, Rank often forgets that he is playing with a team and his antics will, more than once, lead to their defeat. Rank hates the Shadow Dragons (or "the snakes" as he calls them) so much that he is ready to do anything to get rid of them, even if it means resorting to backstabbing or any other dirty tricks he can think of. The machine Rank pilots is a Mad Dog HG, named "Droolin' Duelin' Mad Dog", a name that could fit its pilot just as well...

### Yoji Kirakowa

The Vanguard's expert in "dirty Tricks" (sabotage, electronic warfare, boobytraping, etc.), Yoji is, beside Wallis, the most important member of the team. Mean and quite aggressive, she always seems ready to explode. An orphan from "Trash City", Yoji has kept much of her street gang edge, something that makes her quite dangerous. A specialist in scouting, Yoji is often sent ahead to snoop around the Shadow Dragons and bring back some info that could be used against them. Yoji's gear is a Cheetah, named "Punk-Fu" (she likes to call her adversaries "Punks!!").

### Serge Garpenlov

If Rank is the show-off part of the Vanguard, then Serge is their most discrete part. The oldest of all the Vanguard pilots, Serge is a veteran who has seen many battles and has learned about the benefit of keeping your cool under fire. A deadly marksman, he is also a pro at ambushes and, in that regard, works quite well with Yoji. His motto seems to be "Keep your cool, do your job and come back to fight another day". Serge's Gear is a Jaguar, named "Hammer".

### Von "Boom Boom" Maddox

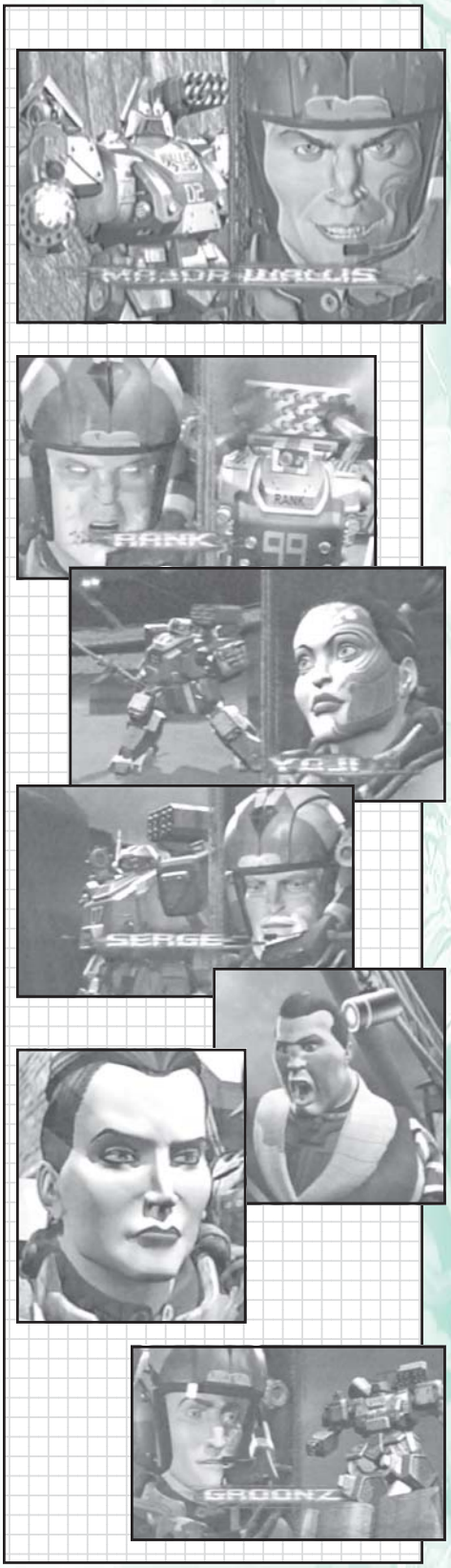
As both the main announcer and organizer, Maddox is one of the most popular sports figures on Terra Nova. However, what a lot of people do not know is that he is willing to do just about anything to turn a profit, including helping the Vanguard so that the show stays interesting. The Interpolar War had nearly bankrupted Maddox, but he has made a come back with the Heavy Gear Championship Tournament and he has no intention of letting something as lame as honour or loyalty get in his way...

### Colonel Magnilda Rika

The true Commander of the Vanguard Of Justice and one of the two reasons why Major Wallis has stooped so low in his attempts to regain his lost title of Heavy Gear Champion. She is quite displeased by the poor performance of the Vanguard in reclaiming the title and has, more than once, used underhanded tactics that puts them at risk just so that she can get rid of the Dragons. Not a very nice person...

### Gunther Groonz

The fifth member of the Vanguard team, Groonz is their heavy weaponry specialist. An explosives freak, he enjoys inventing new ways to blow up his adversaries and even gives names to the bombs he makes! Since he is the Vanguard's fire support specialist, it is only normal that Groonz has the biggest, most heavily armed HG available in the North: a Kodiak, which Groonz named "Crunch Muncher".

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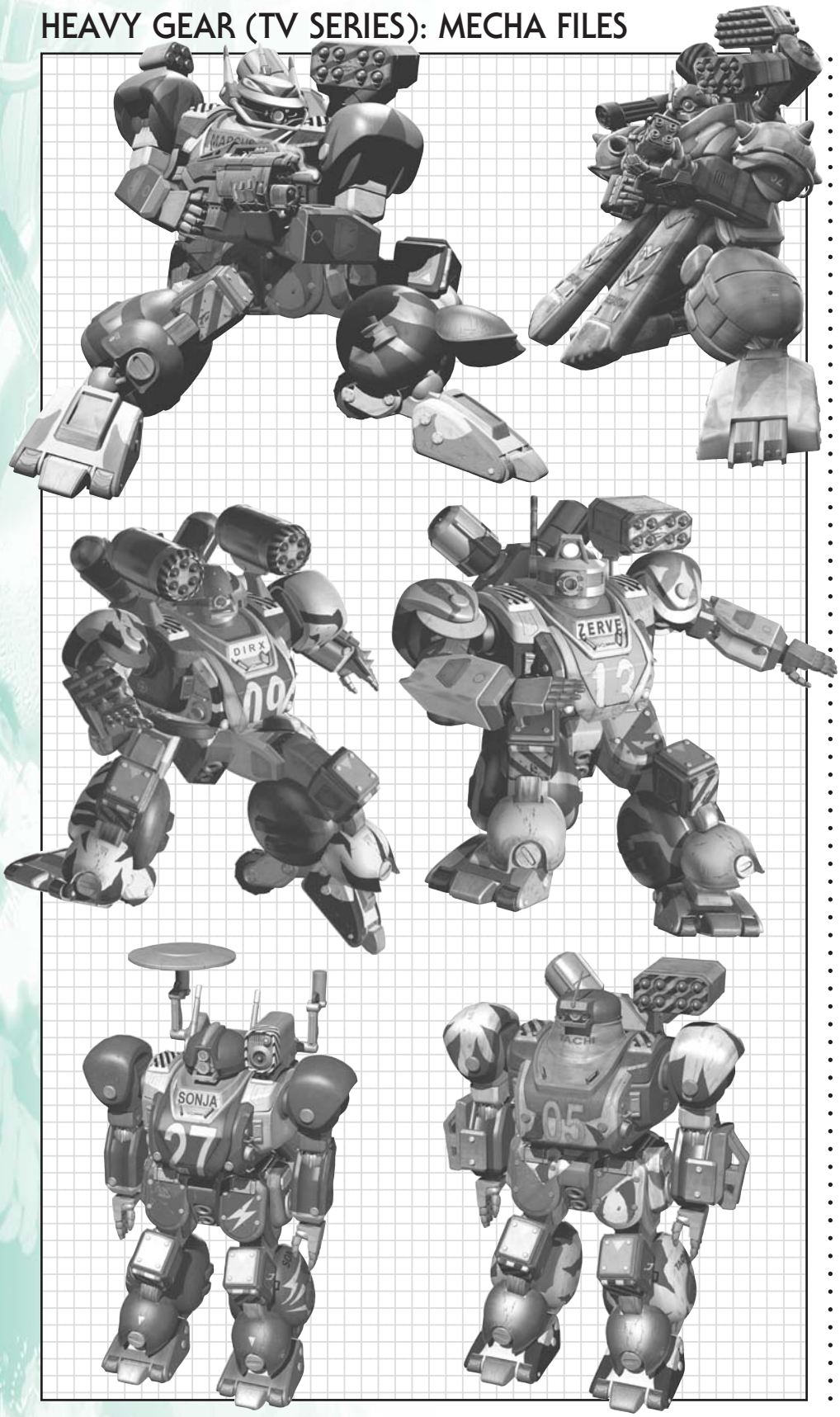
# HEAVY GEAR (TV SERIES): MECHA FILES




## *"The Good Guys"*

### "Red Rover" — Command Hero Jäger

"Red Rover" is the HG Marcus inherited from his childhood hero, Lt. Jan Augusta. Along with augmented performance from the standard Jäger, "Red Rover" is also armed with an experimental rapid-fire "pulse-shock" rifle, a modified Autocannon which fires powerful energy rounds. After episode #15, "Red Rover" is modified with a new technology which increases its speed and mobility.

### "Warhawk" — King Cobra

Not surprisingly, Sebastian pilots a King Cobra, one of the most powerful HGs ever produced. Designed to punch through enemy lines, the King Cobra is a perfect Gear for Sebastian, who can use all of its monstrous potential as an assault machine. Even if "Warhawk" is a little slow compared to the other machines, it more than makes up for it in armor and firepower.

### "Buzz Womp" — Armored Jäger

The perfect choice for Dirx, who thinks that beating the dust off your opponent should be a "hands on" experience. With "Buzz Womp's" heavy armor, he can soak up a lot of punishment and still end up the winner. And if he cannot get as close to the enemy as he wants, he can still use the Heavy Automatic Grenade Launcher!

### "Crush Bucket" — Desert Jäger

Zerve's "Crush Bucket's" most remarkable pieces of equipment are its "Laserflame" Cannon (a new kind of flamethrower that uses a High Intensity Laser) and a huge claw built on its left forearm. The armament is completed by an Anti-Gear Missile Launcher (8 missiles) and a Grenade Launcher.

### "Sweet Venom" — Long Bow Blitz Jäger

The ultimate HG for the Badlands, the "Sweet Venom's" agility gives it the possibility of tackling just about any terrain. It could be considered a kind of "Mountain Bike HG" for extreme Gear pilots! The main weapons of "Sweet Venom" are a Heavy Autocannon and a Rotating Anti-Gear Missile Pack.

### "Bonzai Basher" — Rattlesnake

Of all the Southern Gears, the "Bonzai Basher" is the only one to wield a Gear-size Vibro-Katana sword. This is a one of Tachi's most cherished possessions, as it was inherited from his grandfather. Along with the Gear's special Stealth coating, the Vibro-Katana is what makes "Bonzai Basher" so efficient in close combat.

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# HEAVY GEAR (TV SERIES): MECHA FILES (Continued)

## *"The Bad Guys"*

### "King Of Sting" — Grizzly

Along with boosted performance and armor, Wallis' Grizzly HG's most remarkable modification is its head unit, taken from a Headhunter HG. This gives the "King Of Sting" superior communications abilities, something useful for a leader's machine. After episode #14, "King Of Sting" is modified with new technology which will force Marcus to do the same with his "Red Rover".

### "Droolin' Duelin' Mad Dog" — Mad Dog

Although not considered very efficient by military standards, the huge Mad Dog HG has one thing Rank wanted more than anything else: lots of missiles to fire! Supplemented by a 40mm Autocannon, machineguns and Grenade Launchers; "Droolin' Duelin' Mad Dog's" armament is more than enough to make up for Rank's inherent lack of brains...

### "Punk-Fu" — Cheetah

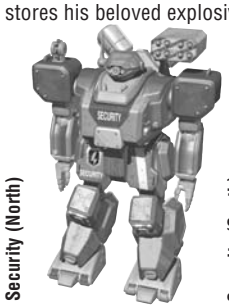
Along with Sonja's "Sweet Venom", Yoji's "Punk-Fu" can be considered one of the fastest HG on the Heavy Gear Tournament circuit. With the help of "Punk-fu's" complete Electronic Warfare Suite, Yoji can enjoy one of her favorite sports: hack enemy Gears' systems while battling them!

### "Hammer" — Jaguar

Serge's "Hammer" is the Vanguard's sniper HG. Equipped with an Arrowlight Laser Rifle, an exceptional target acquisition system and a very well trained Neural Net, "Hammer" rarely misses its target. However, when it does, it can engage its enemy the way Serge likes it: fast and hard!

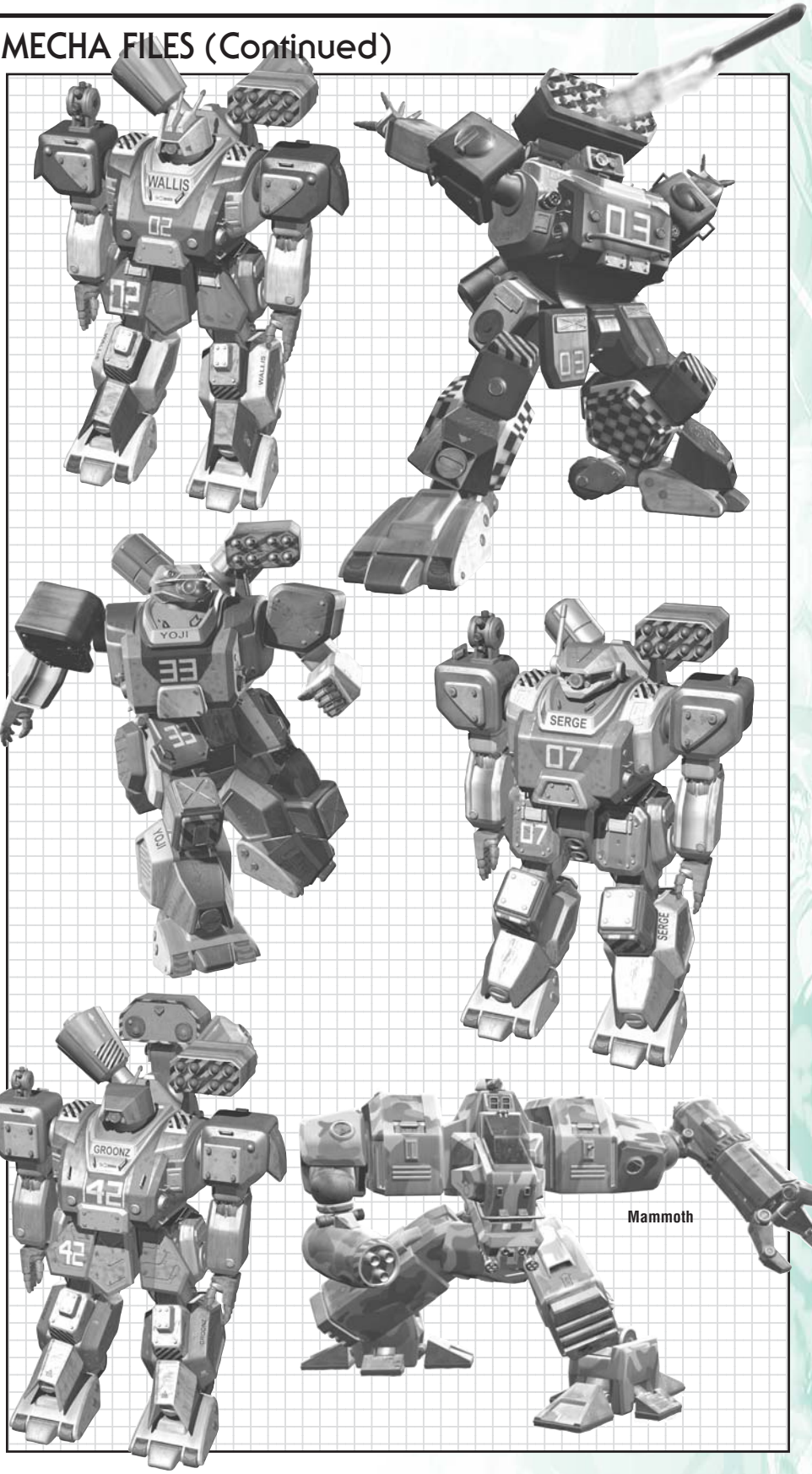
### "Crunch Muncher" — Kodiak

The Vanguard's counterpart of Sebastian's "Warhawk" King Cobra HG, Groonz's Kodiak is one of the most powerful HG on the planet. Super heavy armor, along with its powerful Particle Accelerator makes "Crunch Muncher" a scary adversary indeed. It has a set of compartments into which Groonz stores his beloved explosives...



Security (North)

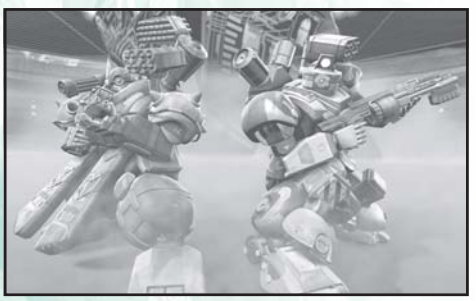
Security (South)

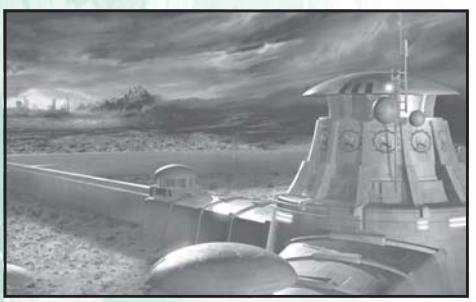



Mammoth

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# HEAVY GEAR (TV SERIES): SYNOPSES





## 1. The Tournament

The dream of Marcus Rover, a boy from the Badlands of Terra Nova, is to, one day, become Heavy Gear Champion in the now famous Heavy Gear Championship Tournament. However, Marcus' uncle, Greco, is not really charmed by the prospect, Marcus' dad having been killed in a Gear duel. The only real contact Marcus has with HGs is that he is a mechanic for the South's famous Shadow Dragons dueling HG team. The team trusts Marcus implicitly and Marcus tries to live up to their expectations by finding for them a rare piece of hardware. But Von "Boom Boom" Maddox has other plans and stops Marcus from delivering the part. Meanwhile, the Shadow Dragons have entered the arena and are facing their Northern counterparts, the Vanguard Of Justice, led by the current Heavy Gear Champion, Major Drake Alexander Wallis III. Lt. Jan Augusta, leader of the Shadow Dragons starts his duel with the Vanguard's Rank and gets a good beating. Soon the duel becomes a free for all and Marcus, horrified, watches on as his heroes and friends have their butts kicked. Furious, Marcus escapes, steals a clown HG (used for entertaining the crowd between duels) and jumps into battle. To Wallis' horror, Marcus, using tactics that are definitely NOT in the rule book, manages to help the Dragons win this engagement...

## 2. The Face-Off

Marcus has repaired Lt. Augusta's HG and has gone out for a test run. What Marcus does not know is that the Vanguard's true Commander, Colonel Magnilda Rika, has ordered Wallis and his team to hunt him down and get rid of him. While in the desert, Marcus is attacked by the Vanguard, who think he is Augusta. Now Marcus has to fight a running battle, a battle that will most certainly end with Wallis' victory if Marcus does not get help soon...

## 3. Training A Dragon

Thanks to the retirement of Lt. Augusta and the courage and skills he has shown so far in battle, Marcus gets the chance of a lifetime: gain a place as one of the Shadow Dragons. However, Lt. Creet, who is there to evaluate Marcus, does not give the kid an inch of slack and keeps trying to flush him. Marcus MUST reach 75 points in evaluation and the Lieutenant seems adamant that he does not reach the magic score. Moreover, Marcus has Serge and Yoji of the Vanguard trying to sabotage his every efforts...

## ⚠ SPOILER AHEAD ⚠

## 4. Grudge Match

Marcus being such a good pilot at such a young age is an admirable feat, but it has provoked some resentment in the Shadow Dragons. Dirx is somewhat upset at the kid upstaging him and heads out to blow off some steam. However, he is so enthralled in his anger that his meeting with the Vanguard ends up in him challenging them for a duel. This is a chance the Vanguard will not pass up and they charge. The rest of the Dragons are not exactly pleased by Dirx taking chances like that, but, since he insists that he can lead them to victory if they listen to him, they decide to follow his lead... Right into the Vanguard's trap and the only one who can get them out of there is Marcus...

## 5. The Desert Duel

While in the desert transporting Gear parts for the Dragons, Budd Squire, their head mechanic and parts supplier (as well as the pilot of the clown Gear seen in the first episode), is attacked by the Vanguard, who steal his truck. However, Dirx does not believe Budd's story and accuses him of having sold the parts to someone else. Now the Dragons have to find their parts or they will not be able to participate in the 24 hour Baja race, an extremely tough event they have never lost before. The Dragons begin the race at a disadvantage and it will take all of Marcus' cunning to dig them out of the hole they are currently in...

## 6. Gear Wars

Budd Squires has built himself a funny little piece of hardware: a remote which can take control of any HGs Neural Net (the machines' main computer). This worries Marcus a bit and he decides to play around with "Red Rover"s Neural Net so that it becomes impervious to Budd's remote. However, in doing so, he has activated the NN's Voice Enhancer and the machine is now talking to him, saying things Marcus does not necessarily want to hear. Of course, the Vanguard have heard about Budd's little invention and Yoji has stolen it. Just imagine what happens when she takes control of Sebastian's "Warhawk" and turns it against the Dragons... Usually, Marcus can help, but "Red Rover's" reconfigured NN has other ideas about the whole situation...

## 7. The Train

Marcus has dramatically upstaged Yoji in an event and the Vanguard's little lady is not very happy about it. However, she gets a chance to get even when Rank reveals another of his hare brained plans: unhooking

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# HEAVY GEAR (TV SERIES): SYNOPSES (Continued)

the Dragon's car from the Maglev train taking them to the tournament's next event. As the Vanguard nearly flawlessly executes their plan, Yoji goes after Marcus, only to be saved by him when her Gear loses its footing and nearly plunges to oblivion. Right on the spot, Maddox decides that this could be an interesting challenge: the team getting to the next event first will win extra points. The Vanguard run away with the repaired train, but, thanks to a neat gadget, Marcus has a good idea on how to win this new race...

## 8. Sacrifice

Wallis and the Vanguard have not been performing up to Colonel Rika's expectations and she is getting rather tired of them always being beaten by the Shadow Dragons. She is about to look for another way of getting rid of them when Wallis asks (OK, begs...) for another chance to regain her trust. Rika accepts to give him one more chance, but at one condition: his team will be joined by a GREL soldier named Vigon. In the Dragons' team, Zerve suggests to Sebastian to try to "hang loose", something the big GREL has some problems with (not that he does not try!). Later, the Vanguard, despite Vigon's help against Sebastian, are defeated by the Dragons in the first rounds of the Orem tournament and Colonel Rika decides to use her own charming way to get rid of the Dragons: an Anti-Matter bomb that will wipe them out. The negative point to all this is that the Vanguard and the entire city will suffer the same fate! Luckily for them all, Wallis finds out about the bomb...

## 9. The Tunnels

The entire Terra Nova underground is a vast maze of tunnels, known as the McAllen tunnels. The stretch from the Waterloo Arena to the New Baja Arena is where one of the most dangerous races of the HG Championship takes place. Tachi Kusonoki, having been there before, is made leader of the Dragons for this race. However, the Vanguard have other plans. Equipped with a stealth Gear (read "invisible" Gear...) Serge Garpenlov has been given the mission of disrupting the Dragons' race and his first mission is to get rid of Tachi. Serge does so and even steals Tachi's Vibro-Katana, something he will woefully regret later...

## 10. Mega Duel

The Dragons and the Vanguard face each other in the last event of the HG Championship, which will give the winning team the last 500 points. The first round consists in a "Last Gear Standing" duel, with only the last standing Gear of each team being able to go on to the grand finale, a fight against the huge "Mega Gear". Of course, Colonel Rika and Maddox would be pleased if Marcus got whacked and Wallis won the title. But Marcus has no intention of getting himself put on the deceased list and he beats Wallis (not by much, though...), becoming the new Heavy Gear Champion...

## 11. Disqualified

Marcus' new title of Heavy Gear Champion is taken away from him, as security camera images show him rigging the pop-up walls of the Trash City arena with explosives. Of course, Marcus protests, but the rules are clear: the Dragons will have to fight the Vanguard in a three round revenge match, but without Marcus' help. Marcus' uncle Greco heads off to try to clear his nephew's name while the Dragons try to survive their fight against the Vanguard and their new team mate, Draven...

## 12. Marcus Rover, Northern Ace

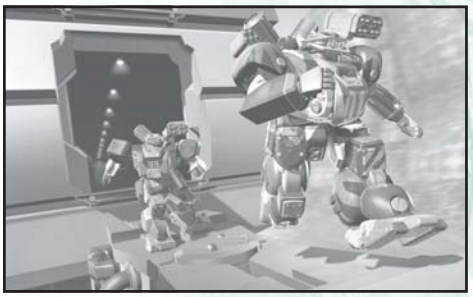
Marcus has a nasty surprise when Colonel Rika has his uncle Greco kidnapped as a bargaining chip for a rather uncool deal: If Marcus does not become a member of the Vanguard, she will do something bad to Greco. Marcus, trapped, accepts, but Sebastian is the only Dragon to know what happened. Of course, Dirx is furious and decides to annihilate the "traitor". When Marcus starts to show some signs of trying to go back on the deal, Rika ups the ante and sends the Northern military into Orem, Marcus' hometown...

## 13. Mercenary Gambit

While traveling to Dirx's hometown of Dunnigan for a HG demonstration, the Dragons are intercepted by desert raiders known as the Sand Stalkers. Commanded by a harridan with the charming name of "Crusher" Von Krieg, the raiders have taken hold of Dunnigan and just won't let go. To make things worse, the village's mayor is none other than Dirx's smart aleck dad Anatole and Lt. Creet (Lt. "Creep" for Marcus...) has made an interesting offer to Von Krieg: a two round slugfest between the Dragons and the raiders, with the village as prize! At first, the Dragons don't have too many problems, but Von Krieg has a surprise in store for them: a giant Hovertank with LOTS of cannons and armor...

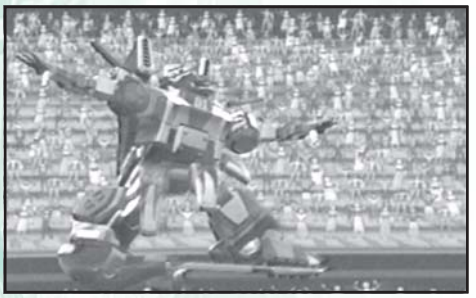
## 14. Happy New Gear

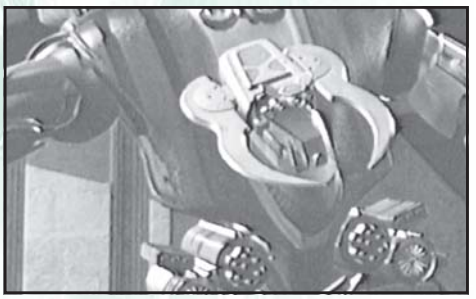
While snooping around an old Terra Novan temple to see if he could scrounge up a juicy piece of hardware or two, Budd Squires finds a secret underground laboratory containing some incredible HG technology.



Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# HEAVY GEAR (TV SERIES): SYNOPSES (Continued)





**PRODUCTION INFORMATION**

***Heavy Gear***, Animated TV series, Season 2001-02: 40 x 30 min., first 26 episodes aired in syndication on 171 stations from 09-22-01 to 03-02-02, rated 7+. Dir.: Johnny Darrell, Tim Eldred, Sean Frewer, William Lau, Sean Osborne; Char. Des.: Fil Barlow; Developer & Story Ed.: Mark Hoffmeier, Richard Raynis, Mark Seidenberg; Techn. Dir.: Jason Osipa; Ass. Dir.: Elizabeth Rufenacht; Orig. Music: Wayne Boon, Jim latham; Spec. Effects: SFX Mainframe; Producers: Adelaide Productions, Mainframe Entertainment; Cast: Charles Shaughnessy (Wallis), Lukas Haas (Marcus), Greg Ellis (Rank, Bob Stonefire); Clancy Brown (Zerve, Vigon, Draven), Michael Chiklis (Augusta), David DeLuise (Dirx), Sarah Douglas (Ryka), Nicholas Guest (Groonz), Ed Hopkins (Sebastian), Tom Kane (Greco), Clyde Kusatsu (Tachi), Karen Maruyama (Yoji), Keith Szarabajka (Serge), Vanessa Williams (Sonja), Jim Wise (Maddox), Dom DeLuise (Mayor Conn), Michael Harrington (Lt. Creet), Dublin James (Budd Squires), Joan Van Ark (Von Krieg). Nominated for the '02 Golden Reel Award for its sound editing. Based on *Heavy Gear* by Pierre Ouellette and Dream Pod 9. Licensed by Paradox Entertainment.

However, while rummaging around, Budd awakens a couple of aggressive dinosaur-like robots (named Guardian Gears) who follow him back to Orem. The Dragons manage to defeat the Guardian Gears and soon go back to the subterranean lab. Unfortunately, the Vanguard have already been there and Wallis has upgraded his "King Of Sting" HG to a whole new level of Gear crunching technology!...

## 15. Transformation

While the population of Orem are throwing a big party for the Dragons, the Vanguard suddenly attacks, then retreats, causing the Dragons to go after them in hot pursuit. Unfortunately for Marcus and the Dragons, Wallis is waiting for them in his newly upgraded "King Of Sting" and makes them regret their somewhat Gung-Ho decision. Marcus realizes that the only way they will keep the Vanguard off their case is to upgrade their own machines and the Dragons go back to his shop, only to find out that the Vanguard trashed the place, leaving just enough stuff to upgrade one Gear. After some discussion and a vote, the Dragons decide to upgrade Marcus' "Red Rover", finishing the job with only minutes left to show up for the next tournament. But "Red Rover" has some surprises of its own...

## 16. The Monster Of The Maze

This time, the tournament consists in entering a maze of tunnels, where a Gear-eating monster is believed to be wandering, ever hungry. Wallis goes in first and becomes appetizer for the monster... Or so everybody is led to believe. Marcus then enters the maze, only to be followed by his team mates, who do not want him to end up like Wallis. The Dragons carefully explore the maze, but fall into a trap, where a huge bio-mechanical creature (an experiment by the Northern military), known as the Minotaur, jumps them. At first, Zerve's groovy positive waves seem to have an effect, but then Dirx fires and all hell breaks loose. The Dragons escape the maze, but are followed by the Minotaur. It is at this point that Wallis shows up again (much to Rank's joy...) and the two teams join their forces to get rid of the giant creature...

## 17. The Scavenger Hunt

Maddox's next challenge is a scavenger hunt, sponsored by everyone's favorite breakfast cereal, Gear Crispy. The two teams race with abandon and give everything they have. However, for once, the Vanguard's dirty tricks pretty much work and the Dragons lose the hunt. A proud Wallis is then awarded the trophy for his team's magnificent performance: a toy train, a special, numbered edition, just for him! Wallis is, needless to say, not jumping for joy...

## 18. The Ultra Duel

Wallis has a brand new toy, a gift from Colonel Rika: a rifle that fires an unbreakable energy field around your adversary. Marcus having felt the effect of the weapon, he and the Dragons decide that Wallis using this weapon is certainly a rules violation, but since Maddox seems to be rather lax when applying the rules with the Vanguard, they have no choice but to steal it from him to destroy it. For this, they have to go to the North's capital, Valeria, and break into the Vanguard's headquarters. Unfortunately, Sebastian gets a violent anxiety attack (he does not like labs) and the Dragons are captured and thrown in jail... Forever! However, thanks to another of Sebastian's anxiety attacks, they break out of their cells and try to escape. Maddox, hearing about this event, turns it into a tournament (of course...): if the Dragons manage to escape, they are free! But Marcus also thinks about Wallis' new weapon...

## 19. Under Orem

The next tournament is about each of the teams being able to load up as much Tiranium fuel as possible, then return to the arena. The mission given to Groonz by the Major is to make sure that the Dragons do NOT make it out of the underground. Unfortunately, Groonz does his job a little too well, as he and Marcus are trapped in a cave-in... with Groonz's super-powerful bomb, a lovely piece of hardware he named "Clarice" (Groonz IS a freak...)! Now the two of them must work together to get out of there...

## 20. Gear Scout Jamboree

Each of the two teams now take care of "Gear Scouts", a troop of young admirers/ future HG pilots they have taken under their wing. The Dragon Scouts are adamant in joining the Dragons for their next tournament, but Marcus convinces them to stay behind. Or so he thinks. While racing to the top of an icy mountain, Marcus and Sebastian have to take care of two immensely important packages: two little kids who are having way too much fun to see what danger they are really in...

## 21. Rolling Brawl

Marcus and Rank's contracts with Maddox are very clear: he has ALL rights on them and can force them to do pretty much what he wants. And what Maddox wants

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Kevyn Beesley Bardell (Order #56033683)

# HEAVY GEAR (TV SERIES): SYNOPSES (Continued)

is a kid's TV show. Called "Rover & Ranks", the rather brainless series is a parody of the two's adversity, with Marcus always coming out the winner. With this commitment dropped on them, neither of the two can help their team win the next tournament, something called "Brawl Ball". Rank being the champion of this game (and he IS pretty good at it!), he is a little frustrated not to be able to participate. But when Marcus sees that the Vanguard are applying their dirty tricks tactics against his friends, he breaks his contract and goes out to help them, soon followed by Rank...

## 22. All-Star Gears

Maddox has decided to try something new: create an All-Star Heavy Gear Team. To do so, the two teams will run a race together and at every lap, the last Gear to cross the line will be taken out of the lineup. The final result is this: Marcus and Wallis (of course) will lead Sonja, Dirx, Rank and Yoji into the temple ruins to fight against three specially created bio-mechanical Dino Gears. But Serge and Groonz are not happy about having been left out of the party and they decide to help the Vanguard. Fortunately for the Dragons, Zerve and Tachi are keeping an eye on them. Now the All-Star team's only concern are the Dinos...

## 23. Close Encounters Of The Gear Kind

While on a training run, the Dragons spot an unidentified object, seemingly a ship, hurtling through the atmosphere. Arriving at the crash site, the Dragons encounter the ship's single crew member, a huge metallic creature with a lot of teeth. The Dragons try to become friends with the rather scary creature, when the Vanguard, who had spotted the ship and sneaked in, fire on it, letting it believe that the Dragons fired. The alien starts running after the Dragons, showing its incredible ability to absorb energy. Later, as the two teams begin their next tournament, it soon becomes obvious that the Vanguard has teamed up with the creature. However, no one really knows what the creature is really after and the Vanguard's new ally may not be as good a team player as they first thought...

## 24. Under Water, Under Siege

Zerve and Ranks have made a bet: the first to get a tooth of the legendary Lake Belus monster is THE man! Maddox has made a tournament out of this bet and now the two teams have to go down the lake's murky water and find the hypothetical monster. After fighting squids and some kind of metal-eating fish, the two teams are pretty much ready to give up the search. Until the monster, not so hypothetical after all, attacks them, that is. Of course, Rank would rather run than face the truly huge creature (who swallows him and his Gear anyway...), but Zerve's positive waves make him stand his ground and get the teeth. All Rank has to show for this rather dangerous little adventure is a Gear covered with slimy stomach fluid. Yuck!...

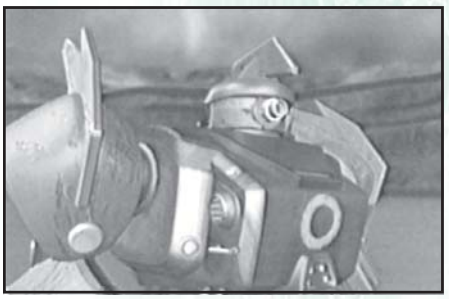
## 25. The Zero Racer

Marcus is the Heavy Gear Champion Of The World. He is Good, he is fast, he is in the zone! Until the "Zero Racer" shows up, that is! The red Gear has shown him up during a demonstration and Marcus is not about to let the red marvel and its mysterious pilot make a fool out of him again. While racing on an out-of-service Maglev train line, the two teams have their hands full with the "Zero Racer", who really seems to be playing for keeps. However, when Groonz blows up the track and forces all the Gears to jump on the functioning Maglev line, the two teams have to find a way to get out and quick, for a train is coming straight for them! If Marcus thinks this is a bad surprise, wait until he discovers who pilots the "Red Racer"!

## 26. The Spider's Web

When Wallis gets stomped by Marcus one time too many, he takes the decision no one ever thought he would take: he retires! Now Yoji is the leader of the Vanguard and she is determined to make the Dragons' life miserable. The next tournament being "The Spider's Web", her job will not be too difficult! Soon, only Marcus and Sonja remain on the Web (which DOES look like a spider's web!) and Sonja goes after them with her Vibro-Whip. Who cares if she does not have the right to use it? However, the two Dragons manage to beat her. This is when a huge Spider Strider makes its entry and goes after them! Guess who is at the controls?...

27. The Big Round-Up
28. The Rise & Fall Of The Heavy Gear Empire
29. The Space Race
30. Gearrasic Park
31. Heavy Gear Smashdown
32. Tournament Xtreme
33. The Vanguard Storm
34. When Gears Collide
35. The Most Dangerous Gear
36. Gear-Lympiad
37. Marcus Rover Highlights
38. Of Monster And Mayhem
39. The Third Degree
40. Gears Of Fire



## MEDIAGRAPHY

**SCIENCE FICTION ROLEPLAYING & TACTICAL GAME**

There are tons of *HG* books & supplements from Dream Pod 9 (www.dp9.com) — not to mention the old card game, *Heavy Gear Fighter*) — but lets start with *Heavy Gear Rulebook 2nd Ed.* (#DP9-101, 1997, SC, 240pg, $29.95 US, ISBN 1-896776-32-9) and *Heavy Gear Duelist's Handbook 2nd Ed.* (DP9-105, 2000, SC, 128pg, $20.95 US, ISBN 1-896776-95-7).

**VIDEO GAME**

Activison (www.activision.com) has licensed and produced two computer video games for PC: *Heavy Gear* and *Heavy Gear II*.

**FIGURES**

Fusion Models (www.dp9.com/fusion) produced a 1/35 Kodiak resin kit (not available anymore) as well as diorama pieces. DP9 (www.dp9.com) also produced over sixty sets or individual *Heavy Gear* miniatures, including the gears from the TV series.

**WEB PAGES**

For more information you can check: www.dp9.com; www.mashsomemetal.com; hgconfluence.cjb.net; epguides.com/HeavyGear/; us.imdb.com/Title?0274262.

Special thanks to Robert Dubois and Marc-Alexandre Vézina of Dream Pod 9, as well as the people of www.mashsomemetal.com and Heavy Gear Confluence for providing information.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

## *SPRIGGAN* GOES TO THE BIG SCREEN

The long-awaited, nation-wide theatrical release of *Spriggan* is a treat anime fans have been waiting for for some time: a major, high-budget anime production, not only suited for the big screen, but screaming for it.

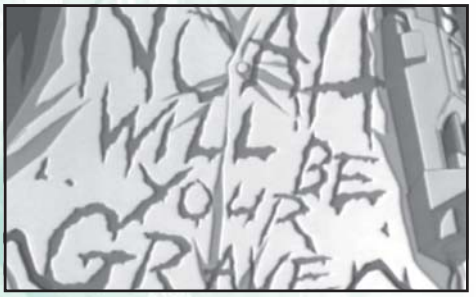
Based on the original manga of the same title by HiroshiTakashige and Ryoji Minagawa, *Spriggan* first appeared as a popular serial-adventure in the monthly magazine *Shonen Sunday* from 1989 to 1996. Later released as a paperback, *Spriggan* sold over six million copies in Japan as well as scores of thousands in several other languages including the English translation *Striker*. This overwhelming popularity assured *Spriggan*'s future as an anime production.

*Spriggan* starts out as a team of scientists in a deep, snow-covered mountain ravine discover the Ark of Noah and pay the price for disturbing the property of God. The opening sequence itself is an amazing piece of animation, but is only a small taste of what comes later. In fact, it is so well done that if you were to be in a theater unaware during the opening sequence it would be some time before you would realize that what you were seeing was not live-action but animated.

The story's hero, Yu Ominae, is only seventeen years old, but possesses astonishing physical and fighting abilities. Still in high school, Yu occasionally misses weeks of school at a time. This is because Yu is Japan's number one Spriggan, an elite soldier of ARCAM.

ARCAM itself is an organization dedicated to ensuring that technology from an unknown and extinct civilization doesn't fall into hands that could use its immense power to rule the world. Stories of the wonders of this technology still survive as legends and even as religious doctrine around the world. This includes the Ark of Noah, which, now discovered, may prove to be the single most dangerous artifact on Earth.

Upon returning to school from one of his "absences," Yu's notices a classmate and friend is acting strangely. After class Yu follows his friend to the roof of the school where he finds him standing near the edge. As Yu approaches, his friend opens his jacket revealing explosives strapped to his body along with the words "Noah Will Be Your Grave" written in blood on his shirt. Unable to control his own actions, Yu's friend detonates the explosives, killing himself and injuring Yu.




Certain that the words and strange behavior of his friend are the handiwork of an enemy of ARCAM intended as a personal message, Yu pays Mr. Yamamoto, chief of the Japan ARCAM office, a visit. Yu learns the meaning of "Noah" from Mr. Yamamoto who warns him that the recent actions were designed to lure Yu to Turkey, the location of the Ark of Noah. Young and confident, Yu ignores his mentor's warnings and commandeers an ARCAM aircraft to Turkey.

Yu barely arrives in Turkey when he discovers first-hand that all is not right and must fight his way to Mount Ararat, the location of the Ark. Shortly after arriving there, Yu meets up with old friends in the persons of Dr. Meisel, ARCAM's chief researcher, and Margaret, his brilliant assistant. Yu learns the importance of the Ark from Dr. Meisel and is freshly rearmed by Margaret.

No sooner is Yu brought up to speed that the Machine Corps, a rogue division of the United States' Department of Defense, begins its attack on the research site. Totally out of control, the Machine Corps is bent on securing the Ark for themselves.

The Machine Corps' forces are lead by the cyborgs Fattman and Little Boy (named for the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan at the end of WWII). It is Fattman, a former associate of Yu's, that had lured him there, and not for a friendly reunion.

From this point on, *Spriggan* 's action moves unceasingly, culminating in the arrival of Colonel MacDougall, a young boy with cybernetically-enhanced psychic powers who has killed his way to the top of the Machine Corps.

Through his murderous tactics, MacDougall has secured the key to the Ark and, using the ARCAM research staff as hostages, he forces Dr. Meisel and Margaret to become unwilling accomplices in his quest for ultimate power. In the end, it is Colonel MacDougall that Yu must confront. The outcome will determine whether the Ark will be destroyed or if Earth will have a new god.

***Spriggan*** ©1998 Hiroshi Takashige • Ryoji Minagawa / Shogakukan • Bandai Visual • TBS • Toho. For more information: www.sprigganthemovie.com.

Kenyu Destiny Bandit Order #56033633

# *SPRIGGAN* GOES TO THE BIG SCREEN (Continued)

ADV Films hopes *Spriggan*'s theatrical release will become the "must-see" movie for anime fans across the continent. But the expectations don't stop there. It is completely within the realm of possibility that *Spriggan* will be the catalyst in creating thousands of new anime fans drawn by the film's irresistible action and effects.

Heading up efforts is ADV co-founder and the director/writer/producer for the *Spriggan*'s English language production, Matt Greenfield. Greenfield himself is widely recognized as a leading factor in the growth of anime across the continent and is well known to its fans.

When asked about *Spriggan*'s chances of success as a mainstream release, Greenfield commented, "... we already have been accepted by the mainstream. What we haven't had yet is the true break-through title that goes beyond acceptance and goes into the realm of mega-hit-dom." And a "mega-hit" is exactly what Greenfield and ADV are aspiring for.

Greenfield believes that *Spriggan* is a much better fit for American theaters due to more Western-influences on its story line and action sequences than most anime. In short, *Spriggan* is much more of what American audiences, having cut their teeth on *007*, *Indiana Jones*, and *The Terminator*, have come to expect from a big-screen action-adventure.

If Greenfield is right, then *Spriggan* might just be able to say "open-sesame" to the hearts and minds of America's movie goers and be accepted without question.

ADV Films' goal is a nation-wide release for *Spriggan* in all major markets. ADV hopes that *Spriggan* will enjoy a much wider release than any previous non-children's release including last year's *Princess Mononoke*.

ADV's current intentions are to "platform" *Spriggan* 's theatrical release much along the same lines as last year's surprise smash hit *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. They will initially release in a small number of select theaters and then expand from there. ADV Films believes that *Spriggan* has what it takes to get a widespread release, and, more importantly, become the much-sought-after big screen success.

ADV has good reason to aim so high, namely, producer Katsuhiro Otomo. Otomo has become a legend among anime fans, including American film icon James Cameron (*The Terminator*, *The Abyss* and *Titanic*). Even those fans who may not be familiar with his name are certainly aware of his impressive body of work, much of which has been so extremely popular in North America as to foster large cult followings.

In addition to his extensive contributions to manga, Otomo's work on such well-known projects as *Roujin Z*, *Harmagedon*, and the anime classic *Robot Carnival* secured his fame among fans in North America. Otomo is best known for his single greatest gift to anime fans, the ground-breaking film *Akira*.

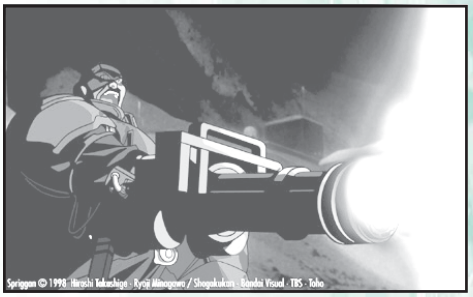
*Akira*, released in 1989 and re-mastered and re-released on DVD last year, became the "gateway" to anime for millions of fans. It is still regarded by many as the single greatest anime release to ever hit the screens in America — or the world.

Hardly an anime fan living, when asked about the top ten feature animes ever created, would not mention *Akira* in the top three. But can *Spriggan* have the same effect on Western audiences?

Matt Greenfield believes an exact duplication of *Akira*'s effect on the anime landscape isn't a realistic possibility. Recognizing that anime is perhaps the fastest growing segment in North American entertainment today, Greenfield commented, "...you're not going to get that same kind of "Whoa! What is this?" reaction ever again."

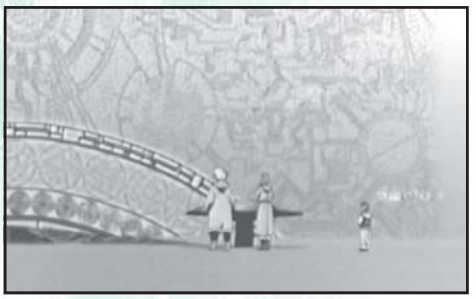
He also expects, due to that same growth in the popularity of anime, that *Spriggan* will be viewed by more people in the next year than saw *Akira* in the first ten years following its North American release. However, like *Akira*, Greenfield believes that many new fans will discover anime through *Spriggan*.

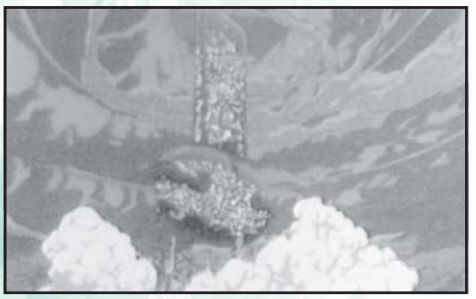
Though the original Japanese film was not specifically produced for Western audiences, *Spriggan* certainly began with American influences. According to Otomo, Hirotsugu Kawasaki, who also worked on the *Akira* project and *Ghost in the Shell*, agreed to make *Spriggan* his directing debut. Otomo commented that Kawasaki (a big fan of the original comic) "...wanted to make American-style entertainment. I think he did what he wanted to do in *Spriggan*."




Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

## *SPRIGGAN* GOES TO THE BIG SCREEN (Continued)





One need not look too deeply to see the Western influences on the storyline in *Spriggan*. The action sequences, which make up the lion's share of *Spriggan*, lack the "pauses-of-contemplation" often found in anime features. Instead, the action moves unceasingly along an intentional path, gripping the viewer and refusing to relent, a technique one typically finds in an American action-adventure film like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

From visual effects to the film's sound, *Spriggan* was created with many of the same tools and techniques currently in use at successful live-action studios in America such as Digital Domain, Rhythm and Hues, and DreamWorks SKG. This, coupled with a magnetic storyline, unfathomably spectacular action sequences, and the mystique that is anime make *Spriggan* what American audiences have come to expect from any quality release — animation or live-action.

The film's often astonishingly-smooth animation will also appeal to Western movie-goers. *Spriggan*'s production staff even went to such lengths as to travel to Turkey to ensure realism in the faces of the characters. The great care taken in the production not only added depth to the characters, but the foreign excursions also yielded uncompromising detail in backgrounds, such as the amazing Turkish vistas, as well.

*Spriggan*'s masterful animation will understandably amaze viewers, but bringing *Spriggan* to realization was no easy task as animation director, Hisashi Eguchi, discovered. Though Eguchi is no newcomer to the anime industry and has had his share of success in projects, such as the popular anime psycho-thriller *Perfect Blue, Spriggan* proved to be a challenge.

Eguchi originally expected the film to involve as many as 50,000 individual, meticulously hand-drawn and painted cels, done at an excruciating level of detail. However, in the final tally, *Spriggan* eventually required a demanding 85,000 separate cels.

Another tribute to *Spriggan*'s details are the phonic mouth movements of the characters. Unlike most anime, *Spriggan*'s characters' mouths move as if actually forming sounds rather than simply opening and closing.

These extra pains, often skirted in animated features due to their high production costs, have proved to be worth every penny. The pay off is *Spriggan*'s surprisingly fluid-like action, the vibrant lifelike vistas that make up the background landscapes, and unsurpassed photographic quality. The location work also brought a level of realism to *Spriggan*'s animation that simply can't be found in other anime feature productions.

In addition to the traditional cel work, efforts to bring *Spriggan* to the big screen also employed stunning CG (computer generated) effects and animation. *Spriggan*'s CG effects were created with the same software package used in films such as *X-Men*, *The Matrix*, *Titanic*, and *Godzilla* (of the Manhattan Godzilla's). Just as seamlessly as the CG effects blended with live actors in these films, so do they with *Spriggan*'s two-dimensional characters.

Though CG effects were originally intended to be applied sparingly to accomplish only those effects that could not be done any other way, that changed. Due to the imaginative story, characters, and subject matter in *SPRIGGAN*, the CG package *Houdini* was found too versatile and indispensable a tool in revealing the director's vision to be relegated to such a minor role. In the words of *Spriggan*'s director, Kawasaki, "We ended up with many scenes that couldn't have been shot without CG, so I guess we did use it a lot after all."

*Spriggan*'s CGI Director, Akiko Saito feels the apex of their CG exploits can be seen in the climatic animation of the Ark's destruction. It is spectacular, but his is a very modest view of the accomplishments of *Spriggan*'s CG department. In truth there are scores of spectacular examples of the art of CG throughout *Spriggan,* such as the control room of the Ark and the simply beautiful skies.

The levels of realism, particularly when dealing with violence and special effects, are indeed as life-like, and, at times, disturbing, as one would find in a modern live-action adventure movie. In fact, *Spriggan* has earned an "R" rating from the Motion Picture Association of America.

The "R" rating certainly hasn't discouraged ADV. They feel certain that *Spriggan* will have a very strong appeal in audiences age 18-34, much as *Akira* did — and still does. That demographic is their actual target audience.

***Spriggan*** ©1998 Hiroshi Takashige • Ryoji Minagawa / Shogakukan • Bandai Visual • TBS • Toho. For more information: www.sprigganthemovie.com.

Kieryn Bleskey Bardell (Order #56033683)

## *SPRIGGAN* GOES TO THE BIG SCREEN (Continued)

Commenting on the rating, Greenfield stated, "As far as I'm concerned, that's the rating the film needed. It's way too graphic and intense for younger kids..."

*Spriggan* has some surprises in the music department as well. Not satisfied with the two-dimensional sound tracks so often associated with anime productions, Otomo asked composer Kuniaki Haishima to create the music for *Spriggan*.

Haishima was obviously looking for a sound that was something new and completely different than the norm. Haishima stated, "I tried to make music that focused on the "mind" aspect..." He added, "Technically speaking, I have been trying to make new music by adding cyberspace-like noise on the top of regular orchestral music." Haishima concluded, "...I succeeded in reaching for a different sound."

Unsatisfied with the equipment used in Japanese recording studios, Haishima obtained a PMC sound recording system, such as was used in the box office smash *Titanic,* for recording the music tracks in *Spriggan.* Haishima felt the film needed that "big-space" sound, similar to what one experiences in a concert hall, which couldn't be created any other way. Big is exactly what he got. *Spriggan*'s music track is stunning and a real treat to anime fans old and new. Crisp and clean, it plays as though you were hearing it in a cathedral.

In addition to the recording equipment, other techniques were used to create a "Western" feeling to *Spriggan*'s music track. In the theme song, Haishima added a David Bowie-like low voice to the amazing lead vocals of Säju. He also had an American female vocalist singing a Chinese song, European-style, in the background.

Haishima stated, "All those different elements harmonized very well, and I think this song matched the film nicely." Once completed, Haishima considered the music for *Spriggan* the most sophisticated work of its kind.

ADV decided the dubbing for *Spriggan* deserved the same level of attention as the original production and brought in an entire extra team of audio designers, including Keith Arem and Mike Draghi. The new team spent weeks perfecting *Spriggan*'s voice track. Other special efforts taken to hone *Spriggan*'s amazingly-sharp sound included attempting to emulate the environment in which the scenes were supposed to be taking place.

The phonic mouth movements of the characters themselves also posed some interesting challenges for ADV's sound team as the dubbing was more akin to live-action than animation. With painstaking attention to detail and timing, along with a sense of perfectionism, ADV met and overcame these challenges with class.

The casting of voice talent for *Spriggan* was not taken for granted either. Weeks of auditions took place before ADV made their final selections using talent from both their Houston and Austin studios (Industrial Smoke & Mirrors and Monster Island).

Perhaps the most challenging role to cast, according to Matt Greenfield, was that of Colonel MacDougall, the cybernetically-enhanced psychotic child with a not-so-cute god complex. After countless auditions Greenfield finally chose the young Sydney-Opera-trained Kevin Corn. Greenfield's choice was certainly on the mark — you'll never look at an eight-year-old quite the same way again.

In the end ADV is rightfully proud of the fruits of their labors. Dolby Labs was so impressed with the finished production they offered to host the industry premieres at their state-of-the-art demo theaters in both Los Angeles and San Francisco. In the sound department, *Spriggan* equals or surpasses any other major motion picture release to date.

With spectacular visual effects, animation smooth as glass, engrossing action, and a stunning soundtrack, *Spriggan* seems to be perfectly suited to not only the expectations but the demands of American movie-goers. *Spriggan* seems to have no weaknesses in regards to the American anime constituency and is destined to become a classic in those circles.

But, does *Spriggan* have what it takes to be accepted by theaters nationwide? Can *Spriggan* draw a whole new audience to the world of anime? Will *Spriggan* be a box office smash? These are the questions that only time can answer. *Spriggan* is destined to be a success, it's too good a production not to be, but will it be THE anime success of the new millennium?

### *STRIKER* MANGA

The fast-action *Spriggan* manga written by Hiroshi Takashige and drawn by Ryoji Minagawa has been published in English by Viz Comics under the title *Striker.* There are three graphic novels available:

***Striker: The Armored Warrior***. "Mission 1: Temple of Fire". Yu must protect a young linguistics expert as she tries to decipher the clues to an ancient shrine uncovered at the base of Mount Fuji. Unfortunately, Arcam has some competition as both the Americans and Russians have sent teams to secure the secrets of the shrine for themselves. "Mission 2: The Armored Warrior". Mount Ararat, the resting place of Noah's Ark, becomes a vicious battlefield as Arcam and a mysterious organization fight for possession of it's secrets. Yu and fellow striker, Jean Jacquemonde, go toe to toe with the Machiner's Platoon in the story that became the basis for "Spriggan the Movie". Collects the *Striker* comics and the story published in *Manga Vizion* Vol. 3, #6. Viz Comics, story by Hiroshi Takashige, art by Ryoji Minagawa, B&W, 248 pg, SC, Cat.# C-T-ST01, $16.95 US.

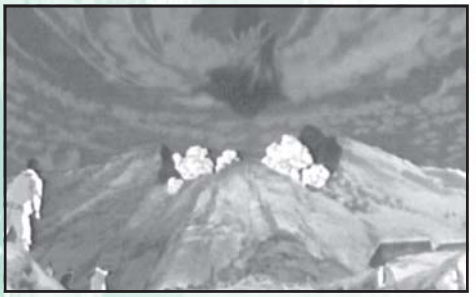
***Striker: The Forest Of No Return***. "Mission 1: Secret of the Berserker" An English Archeological team has uncovered the remains of a berserker and with the help of the British army, plans to revive it. Striker Yu Ominae is rapidly sent to talk some sense into them, even if he has to knock some heads around to do it. Don't they realize that a living berserker would bring a nightmare of destruction to the entire world? "Mission 2: The Forest of No Return". Yu is sent to an ancient Indian forest to investigate the disappearance of Arcam agents only to run into treasure hunter (and thorn-in-his-side), Yoshino Somei. Add in Iwao Akatsuki, from the super weapon corporation-Trident, living corpses, possessed trees, evil spirits and Yu will find out exactly why this place it called the forest of no return. Collects the stories published in *Manga Vizion* Vol. 3, #11-12 and Vol. 4, #1-2. Viz Comics, story by Hiroshi Takashige, art by Ryoji Minagawa, B&W, 208 pg, SC, Cat.# C-T-ST02, ISBN 1-56931-290-7, $15.95 US.

***Striker: Versus The Third Reich***. "Mission 1: The Crystal Skull". What do Neo-Nazis want with a ancient crystal skull? Yu knows and he's got to take it away from them before they unleash its power. At the same time, he's got to protect Suzuko Kawahara. Her father discovered the crystal skull and was killed for it. Suzuko will cause more trouble for Yu as she wants to see for herself why her father died. "Mission 2: The Holy Grail". The Neo-Nazis are back at it. This time they want to resurrect the soul of their fuhrer with the Holy Grail. Yu, along with mystic and fellow striker, Tea Flatte, are assigned to stop them. Oh, and cute, little, (irritating) Yoshino shows up again. Collects the stories published in *Manga Vizion* Vol. 4, #3-8. Viz Comics, story by Hiroshi Takashige, art by Ryoji Minagawa, B&W, 158 pg, SC, Cat.# C-T-ST03, ISBN 1-56931-353-9, $15.95 US.

Manga information compiled by Claude J. Pelletier. For more information: http://series.viz.com/striker/index.html

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# ADV's MATT GREENFIELD ON *SPRIGGAN*



ADV Films has always been willing to take risks to promote the growth of anime in North America. This year ADV is giving anime fans something very special, the much-anticipated theatrical release of *Spriggan*.

Matt Greenfield, co-founder of ADV and the producer/writer/director for the English theatrical release of *Spriggan*, was kind enough to take some time from his amazingly-busy schedule to trade a few words on *Spriggan* and share a few thoughts on its expected success.

**Gerry Poulos (for *Protoculture Addicts*):** Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to respond to some questions for *Protoculture Addicts* Magazine. We really appreciate your time.

**Matt Greenfield:** Thanks, it's always nice to know that people are interested in what goes on at a company like ADV.

**PA:** Let's start at the beginning. How did ADV Films come to the decision to bring *Spriggan* to the "big-screen?"

**MG:** Basically we saw it and said "Wow! We've got to get this!" So we did. You have to keep in mind that most of us at ADV are big fans, so we tend to go after shows that interest us personally. And yes, a theatrical release was part of the plan from the very beginning.

**PA:** Were there any special challenges to be met in getting the rights to *Spriggan*?

**MG:** Not really. ADV has a great relationship with the Japanese studios and the terms of the deal came together pretty quickly.

**PA:** How did you personally come to be involved in the project?

**MG:** Well, as the co-founder of ADV and the senior producer here, it was pretty much inevitable that I'd be involved in some fashion. And since *Spriggan* was going to have to be a phonetic dub… that is to say, one where the lip flaps of the original footage are actually making specific word sounds rather than just flapping open and closed as they do in most anime . . . as the producer/writer/director with the most experience doing that kind of thing, I was the logical choice to handle the scripting and ADR direction [ADR: Automatic Dialog Recording; dubbing].

**PA:** Is *Spriggan* your first "big-screen" anime project as a director?

**MG:** It's the first one to get an actual theatrical release, but the ADR process isn't that much different from what I did on *Gamera: Guardian of the Universe*.

**PA:** How did this experience compare?

**MG:** The biggest difference was that, when you're working in film, you don't have the advantage of instant playback to see the final results. You can use video to get an approximation, but until you actually have the optical audio tracks matched up and printed onto a final composite print, you're always crossing your fingers hoping that everything came out just right. Otherwise, if something looks just a tiny bit off, you have to go back, re-synch and print the whole reel over again.

**PA:** How about the voice talent? Did you already have some people in mind or did you need to hold auditions for any of the roles?

**MG:** I had some people in mind, but we always go through a lengthy audition process to make sure that the voices we end up with are the right ones. As it turned out, after literally weeks of auditions we ended up using people from both the Houston and Austin dubbing studios (Industrial Smoke & Mirrors and Monster Island, respectively) to get exactly the right cast.

**PA:** Were there any especially difficult roles to cast?

**MG:** The hardest part to cast was MacDougall, who's supposed to be physically seven or eight, but mentally a very insane adult. I lost track of how many people we auditioned before we finally found Kevin Corn, who's this amazing kid who trained with the Sydney Opera.

**PA:** It's my understanding that sound man, Yota Tsuruaka, tried out "radically new techniques" to give *Spriggan* a different, more realistic-sounding dialog track in the Japanese language version. Did you take any special measures to reproduce Tsuruaka's efforts for the English language theatrical release?

**MG:** Well, the biggest thing we did was bring in an extra team of audio designers. Keith Arem, who's done a lot of great video game titles, and Mike Draghi, who worked on shows like *Spawn*, spent weeks working on the show, and the final results are so amazing that Dolby Labs ended up offering to host the industry premieres at their state-of-the-art demo theaters in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Christopher Borque, the recording engineer, and I also did some very unusual things while recording, like actually recording dialog in ways that emulated the environment in which the scenes were supposed to be taking place.

**PA:** Were there any other special challenges in getting *Spriggan* ready for American theaters?

**MG:** Oh lots. The sheer challenge of adapting animation that was actually animated with phonetic lip positions alone was a major accomplishment, not to mention directing some scenes in Turkish, which is not a language that I am personally fluent in. And then the whole process of getting the final print "just right" involved a lot of travel back and forth between Houston and LA, which was pretty grueling considering that I was still handling my full regular workload. In the end, though, there really weren't any challenges that we didn't know we could meet going in.

***Spriggan*** ©1998 Hiroshi Takashige • Ryoji Minagawa / Shogakukan • Bandai Visual • TBS • Toho. For more information: www.sprigganthemovie.com.

Kevyn Doshay Bardell Order #56033683

## ADV's MATT GREENFIELD ON *SPRIGGAN* (Continued)

**PA:** Was there a need to do any special editing of *Spriggan* for things like run-time etc.?

**MG:** Nope. The only difference between the Japanese and English prints is the language in the credits and the language the characters are speaking.

**PA:** I've heard that *Spriggan* has received an "R" rating. What are your thoughts on this?

**MG:** I'm very glad it got an "R". As far as I'm concerned, that's the rating the film needed. It's way too graphic and intense for younger kids and having the "R" automatically triggers the response in parents mind that maybe they shouldn't just let their kids in to see it unsupervised.

**PA:** I've seen the screener for *Spriggan* and I have to admit that it was pretty impressive. How big a theatric release are you hoping for?

**MG:** We're still ironing out the final plans, but the initial response from distributors has been great. We'll be platforming it, which is how *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was released, so it'll start out in a few cities and roll out from there.

**PA:** How do you think it will compare to other recent theatrical anime releases?

**MG:** Our goal is to get *Spriggan* into more theaters than any previous non-children anime release, and I think we've got a good shot at it.

**PA:** *Spriggan*'s producer, Katsuhiro Otomo, is, of course, famous for *Akira* which we all know has been the indoctrinating anime for millions of fans today. Do you think *Spriggan* has the stuff to become the new "gateway" anime for the new millennium?

**MG:** Well, its going to be hard to duplicate the impact *Akira* had when it first came over here, because way back then, most people had never even heard of anime, let alone seen something like that. Nowadays anime is one of the fastest growing sections of the entertainment industry, and most people have at least heard about it. That means you're not going to get that same kind of "Whoa! What is this?" reaction ever again. "Wow!"s and "Oh my God!"s, yes, but never again that "Where did this come from?" feeling. On the other hand, for the exact same reasons, I think that *Spriggan* is going to be seen by more people in its first year than *Akira* was seen in it's first ten, and I expect that a lot of new fans will discover anime through it.

**PA:** Do you think *Spriggan* will find itself breaking through and find wide acceptance in the North American mainstream?

**MG:** ADV has been regularly placing titles in the Billboard charts, both Top 40 and Top 10 for the last two years. That's for all films, not just anime. In other words, we already have been accepted by the mainstream. What we haven't had yet is the true break-through title that goes beyond acceptance and goes into the realm of mega-hit-dom. And yes, I think *Spriggan* has a good chance at that.

**PA:** Some people out there have already seen *Spriggan* on home video. What might they be missing if they were to decide to take a pass on the new theatrical release?

**MG:** Even if you've already seen *Spriggan* on home video, you still haven't really seen *Spriggan*. As a matter of fact, I just finished supervising the 1080i transfer of the film for High Definition television, and, even there, you have to have a REALLY big projection set to even get a hint of how awesome this film is on the big screen.

**PA:** When it's all said and done, do you have any regrets?

**MG:** My only regret is that I won't personally be able to go into a theater and see *Spriggan* up on the big screen for the first time.

**PA:** What's next on your plate?

**MG:** Well, I just wrapped on *Gasaraki*, and I'm in the middle of recording *Princess Nine*, which is about a group of girls who form a high-school baseball team and it's just about as far from the world of *Spriggan* as you can get. I'm also in the process of preparing to start work on *Excel Saga*, which is a title a lot of fans have been screaming for, and I've got the *Nadesico* feature, the next group of *Slayers* films and *Gamera 2* & *3* in the production queue as well... and those are just the projects that I'm directing personally.

**PA:** It sounds like you're going to be busy for a while and I'm sure there's more in the works... right?

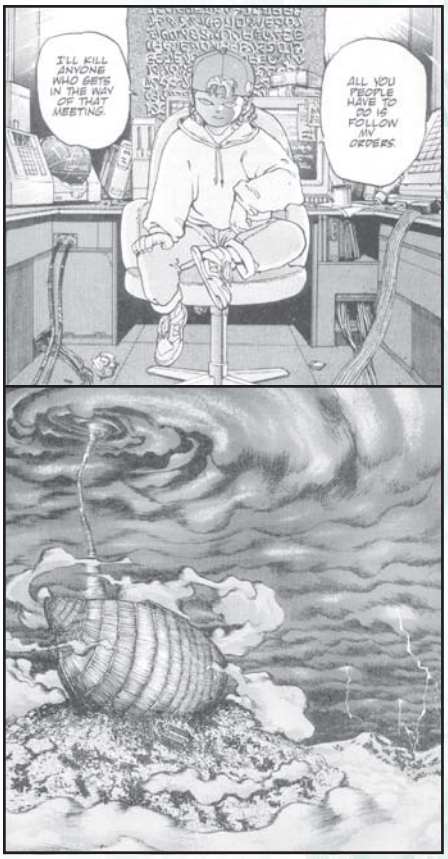
**MG:** There are a couple of other things that I can't talk about yet, but suffice it to say that I'm going to be very busy for the next few years. Fortunately, I love my work and the people I work with, so that's not going to be a bad thing at all.

**PA:** And now for the traditional final question. Is there anything you would like to say to all the anime fans and "fans-to-be" out there chomping at the bit to see *Spriggan*?

**MG:** Just that I hope everyone out there enjoys the film and has as much fun watching it as we did dubbing it. We really do listen to everyone's comments and try to take as many fan suggestions into application as is practically possible.

**PA:** Thank you so much for your time. I know that I speak not only for myself but millions of fans in saying that I truly appreciate your work, efforts, and contributions to anime. Thank you.

**MG:** Thank you.




### MEDIAGRAPHY

**VIDEO**

***Spriggan***, Emotion, BELL-1404, Laserdisc in Japanese, 90 min., ¥8,190.

***Spriggan***, Emotion, BCBA-134 / BCBA-297 (DTS), R2 DVD in Japanese, 90 min.,, ¥8,190.

***Spriggan***, ADV Films, Cat.# DSP-001, Bilingual DVD (R1), 90 min., $29.98 US, avail. on 04/23/02. Rated "R". Extras: English & Japanese 5.1 sound, audio commentary by ADR director, production sketches.

**CD**

***Spriggan* Game Soundtrack**, ABCA-39, ¥2800.

***Spriggan* Original Soundtrack**, COCP-30017, ¥3059.

**MANGA**

***Striker: The Armored Warrior***. Viz Comics, story by Hiroshi Takashige, art by Ryoji Minagawa, B&W, 248 pg, SC, Cat.# C-T-ST01, $16.95 US.

***Striker: The Forest Of No Return***. Viz Comics, story by Hiroshi Takashige, art by Ryoji Minagawa, B&W, 208 pg, SC, Cat.# C-T-ST02, ISBN 1-56931-290-7, $15.95 US.

***Striker: Versus The Third Reich***. Viz Comics, story by Hiroshi Takashige, art by Ryoji Minagawa, B&W, 158 pg, SC, Cat.# C-T-ST03, ISBN 1-56931-353-9, $15.95 US.

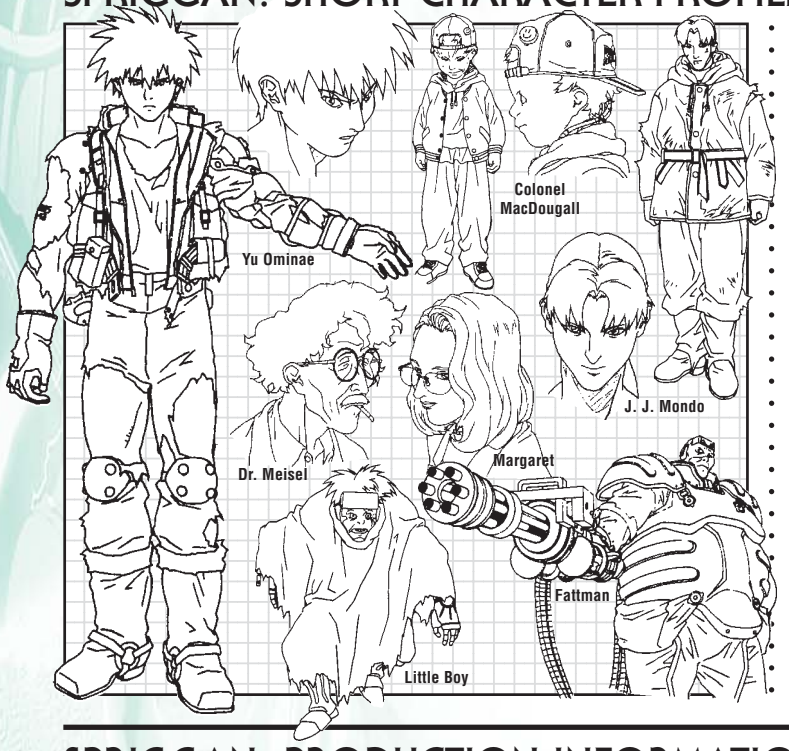
**WEB PAGE**

Official Web Page: www.sprigganthemovie.com

Mediagraphy information compiled by Claude J. Pelletier.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

## SPRIGGAN: SHORT CHARACTER PROFILES




**Yu Ominae:** Posing as a typical high school student, Yu is actually Japan's number one Spriggan. Possessing amazing physical and fighting abilities, Yu suffers from a troubled past that drives him to seek out and destroy evil, no matter the cost.

**Colonel MacDougall:** With cybernetically-enhanced psychic powers, MacDougall is actually a madman trapped in a little boy's body. If not stopped, MacDougall will kill himself all the way to godhood.

**Jean Jaques Mondo:** ARCAM's top Spriggan from France and friend of Yu, Jean is the only ally capable of lending the type of assistance that Yu needs in battling the Machine Corps - massive destructive power.

**Dr. Meisel:** The world's brightest mind and ARCAM's top scientific researcher, Dr. Meisel heads up the Noah Project. He is the man MacDougall needs if he is going to reach his goal of dominating Earth.

**Margaret:** Dr. Meisel's assistant, and a brilliant scientist in her own right, Margaret is the only woman in Yu's life. Acting as a surrogate sister, Margaret sees to it that Yu has the latest in combat technology at the ready.

**Fattman:** Senior killing machine for the Machine Corps, Fattman is himself a cyborg of incredible physical power. He has Yu to thank for his abilities and lures him to Turkey where he seeks to repay the favor.

**Little Boy:** Fattman's insane partner, Little Boy is an unbelievably-fast cyborg using micro-thin filaments from his hands to slice-and-dice those unfortunate enough to get in his way. Getting in his way is exactly what Jean Jaques has in mind.

**Yamamoto:** Chief of the Japan's ARCAM division, it is Yamamoto who takes Yu under his wing as a son. Though he knows Yu might meet his end in Turkey, he also realizes that he cannot stop Yu from taking whatever action his spirit requires of him. [Not Illustrated]

## SPRIGGAN: PRODUCTION INFORMATION

**Spriggan**, 1998, Japan, 90 min., Aspect Ratio: 1:1.85, Dolby SRD, English Language Adaption Produced and Released by ADV Films Inc. **Production Credits:** General Supervisor & Screen Story Structure: Katsuhiro Otomo; Based on the Comics by: Hirotsugu Kawasaki & Yasutaka Ito; Executive Producers: Akito Yamashita, Shigeru Watanabe, Masamichi Fujiwara; Producers: Ayao Ueda, Kazuhiko Ikeguchi, Kazuya Hamana, Haruo Sai, Eiko Tanaka; Director: Hirotsugu Kawasaki; Music: Kuniaki Haishima; Original Song: Saju; Character Design & Animation Director: Hisashi Eguchi; Settings: Yasumitsu Suetake; Direction: Norihiko Sudo; Art Director: Mutsuo Koseki; Color Setting: Hisami Akiyama; Director of Photography: Hisao Shirai; CG Team / Image Director: Akiko Saito; Sound Director: Yota Tsuruoka; Editing: Takeshi Seyama. **English Language Adaption:** Executive Producers: John Ledford, Sharon Papa; International Coordinator: Toru Iwakami; Written, Produced, and Directed by: Matt Greenfield. **Voice Cast** (English Language Adaption): Yu Ominae: Christopher Patton; MacDougall: Kevin Corn; Dr. Meisel: Ted Pfister; Jean-Jacques Mondo: Andy McAvin; Margaret: Kelly Manison; Fatman: Mike Kleinhenz; Little Boy: Spike Spencer; Yamamoto: John Paul Shephard; Mr. Smith: John Swasey. **Animation:** Production Studio: Studio 4EC; Produced by: Shogakukan, Bandai Visual, TBS, Toho/Studio 4EC.

## SPRIGGAN ★★★★

This is a movie we had been waiting for. With the involvement of *Akira*'s Katsuhiro Otomo (as Animation Director and Planner), this was sure to be yet another crowd pleaser. As a matter of fact, it is, but not as much as it could have been. Let us explain why. The animation work is superb, the designs are more than nice, the soundtrack is, to say the least, grandiose (the closing credits' song is REALLY good) and the story is quite entertaining. However, and that is our only beef with this movie, the ending is not as powerful as expected, something that is somewhat disappointing, especially when the huge scope of the story is considered. Do not get us wrong, the ending DOES deliver a punch, but not as much as we thought it would. But, even considering its relatively weak ending, *Spriggan* is a really cool, action-packed movie worth seeing, if only for Yu's incredible antics and the superb (and very original) depiction of Noah's Ark... See also review in PA#57: 15. [Reviewed by Martin Ouellette]

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DSP-001, Bilingual DVD, 90 min., $29.98, R (Violence). Avail. on 04-23-02.

| Designs: | **4.5** | Animation: | **4** | Soundtrack: | **4.5** | Story: | **3.5** | Translation: | **4** | Average: | **4** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

***Spriggan*** ©1998 Hiroshi Takashige • Ryoji Minagawa / Shogakukan • Bandai Visual • TBS • Toho. For more information: www.sprigganthemovie.com.

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***Amanda Winn Lee***
Voice Actor, *Evangelion; Battle Angel; Blue Seed*

***Jason Lee***
Voice Actor, *Evangelion; Blue Seed; Heavy Gear II*

***Fred Ladd***
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***Scott McNeil***
Voice actor, Duo Maxwell, *Gundam Wing; Transformers: Beast Wars; Dragon Ball Z; Ranma 1/2*

***Diana Kou***
Voice actor, Noelle, *I'm Gonna Be An Angel!*

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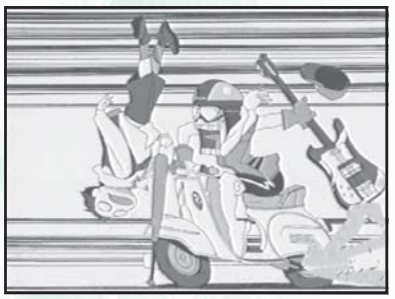
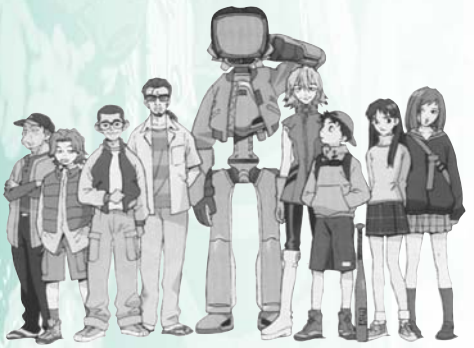
# FLCL: SUMMARY





***Naota wants to be normal. But with a talented brother leaving Japan for the US to play baseball, everyone now looks at him a bit differently. His brother's girlfriend is acting strange and now there's an even stranger girl hitting on him. Literally. With a bass guitar. Oh, did I mention the robots that keep springing from his head?***

***Produced by GAINAX (Neon Genesis Evangelion) and animated by Production I.G. (Ghost in the Shell), FLCL takes animation to yet another level. Get ready for this shocking and funny digital animation about adolescence, expectations and alien intrigue!***

Set in Mabase, a small town in the middle of anywhere Japan, *FLCL*, despite its mix of science fiction and pop culture references, is more a story about growing up than of giant robots. 12-year-old Naota finds himself in the middle of a group of outrageous characters (some even related to him), each responsible in turn for driving him more and more crazy. At times psychedelic and touching, the visually stunning work takes a twisted look at the point in life where childhood yields to adulthood.

## 1. Fooly Cooly

12-year-old Naota already has enough to deal with at home. Both his father and grandfather are more than a little eccentric and less than a little mature. Not to mention the girlfriend his brother left behind, who is now making advancements on him. Now, a self-proclaimed alien, Haruhara Haruko, comes bursting on the scene. Naota is the key to her mission and the weirdness has only just begun.

## 2. Fire Starter

Masked by semi-innocent teasing and flirting, 17-year-old Mamimi is a girl with a past; harboring secrets that Naota doesn't fully understand. There is definitely something about her that seems more complex than she lets on. For some reason, she's obsessed with Fire Starter, a video game about fire and a god named Cantide. And nothing is the same after she sees a black winged deity.

## 3. Mar-Raba

Naota is tired of being harassed to star in the school play, *Puss and Boots*, by that obnoxious class president, Ninamori. But when she gets hurt in an accident with that violent alien Haruko, Ninamori is stranded at Naota's house for the night. Soon, Naota finds out that Ninamori has more personal reasons for wanting him in the play….

## 4. Furi Kiri

Naota feels bad enough that he can't live up to his brother's reputation as a star baseball player. But when Haruko — who's been shamelessly flirting with his father — presumes to take him under her wing and teach him a thing or two about baseball… well, it's the last straw. But things take a strange turn after Naota confronts his Dad about Haruko: Who is that weird guy with the eyebrows searching for Haruko, anyway? And if Haruko doesn't stop a runaway satellite from hitting the town, who will?

## 5. Love Bullet

Naota doesn't really want to fight his Dad over Haruko's affections, but somehow he always gets caught up in these things, right? But as romantic tensions mount something's gotta break – this episode is a loaded gun waiting to go off! What? Haruko's actually in love with some space pirate?

## 6. Furi Kura

Haruko and Canti have vanished off the face of the planet, leaving a surprisingly large void in Naota's now very normal life. So what did happen to Atomsk and his fantastic powers? Is the giant hand going to grab the iron? Will these press releases ever make any sense? You've got to watch it – it's the climax! It's GAINAX! [Titles for episodes 3 to 6 are tentatives].

# FLCL: PRODUCTION INFORMATION

**Kazuya TSURUMAKI, Director**. Sprightly, fun-loving, and certainly imaginative, the playful Kazuya TSURUMAKI rose quickly through the ranks of the animation world, working on *Nadia: Secret of Blue Water*, serving as one of the Key animators on *Ah! My Goddess*, and then moving into an assistant director role on the *Neon Genesis Evangelion* television series. Hideki Anno then entrusted the *Evangelion* movies' direction to him. He moved on as technical director for GAINAX's *Kareshi Kanojo no Jijou* (*His and Her Circumstances*), before being asked in 2000 to create his own series, *FLCL* (pronounced Fooly Cooly).

**GAINAX**, an extremely popular animation and video game production company based in Tokyo, responsible for such titles as *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Nadia: Secret of Blue Water*, *Gunbuster* and *Kareshi Kanojo no Jijou*, has its origins dating back to the Daicon 3 Osaka convention in 1981. They also opened an animation merchandise company called General Products. But it wasn't until December of 1984 that Hideaki ANNO, Hiroyuki YAMAGA, Takami AKAI and Yasuhiro TAKEDA officially launched GAINAX Co., Ltd. for the sole purpose of producing their first feature-length animated film, *Wings of Honneamise*, *The Royal Space Force*.

**Production I.G.** is a Tokyo-based animation production company behind such projects as Mamoru Oshii's renowned *Ghost in the Shell*, the chilling alternative history drama *Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade*, and the full-digital feature *Blood: The Last Vampire*. Started in December of 1987, Production I.G was founded by Mitsuhisa ISHIKAWA and Takayuki GOTO. Some of their early production work includes *Patlabor*, *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*, *Video Girl Ai*, and, later on, *Sorcerer Hunters*. Production I.G also helped GAINAX with animation work on the hit *Evangelion* series.

**Synch-Point** was established in early 2001 as Digital Manga's production division (also known since 1996 for their eManga, the online outlet OmochaBox.com, online magazine Akadot.com, and their distribution division DMD).

***FLCL*** ©1999 Gainax / KGI. All texts (except review) are from Synch Point's press release (edited by Claude J. Pelletier). For more information: www.synch-point.com.

Kieryn Beskow Bardell (Order #56033683)

# FLCL: CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

**Nadaba Naota:** Although only 12-years-old, 6th grader Naota tries to act like he's a grown-up. He has an older brother who went to the US to play baseball. And lately Naota seems to be very concerned about appearances.

**Haruhara Haruko**: Haruko, who claims to be 19 years old, looks like a typical attractive teenager except for the fact that she's actually an alien. Tomboyish and eccentric, she rides around on a Vespa and carries an electric guitar that she swings around quite freely. So freely in fact that she hits Naota in the head with it.

**Samejima Mamimi**: Seventeen years old, Mamimi is Naota's brother's girlfriend, but one wouldn't be able to tell from the way she acts. Ever since Naota's brother left for the US she's been trying to fill the gap he left with other diversions, one being Naota. A habitual smoker and truant, she loves to play video games and believes in the supernatural.

**Nandaba Kamon**: Kamon, a would-be editor, is Naota's father. Unlike his son, he is clearly outgoing and does what he pleases. Naota often reprimands his father for not acting like an adult.

**Nandaba Shigekuni:** Naota's grandfather, is a retired baker. He doesn't like Mamimi.

**Ninamori Eri**: Outgoing and confident, Ninamori Eri, Naota's classmate, is the class president. Like Naota, she finds herself surrounded by immature adults who in her eyes behave like children. As a result she tries to act grown-up, but learns to come into her own.

**Masamane Masashi**: Masashi Naota's classmate speaks matter-of-factly.

**Manabe Gaku**: Gaku is Naota's other ultra-hyper classmate.

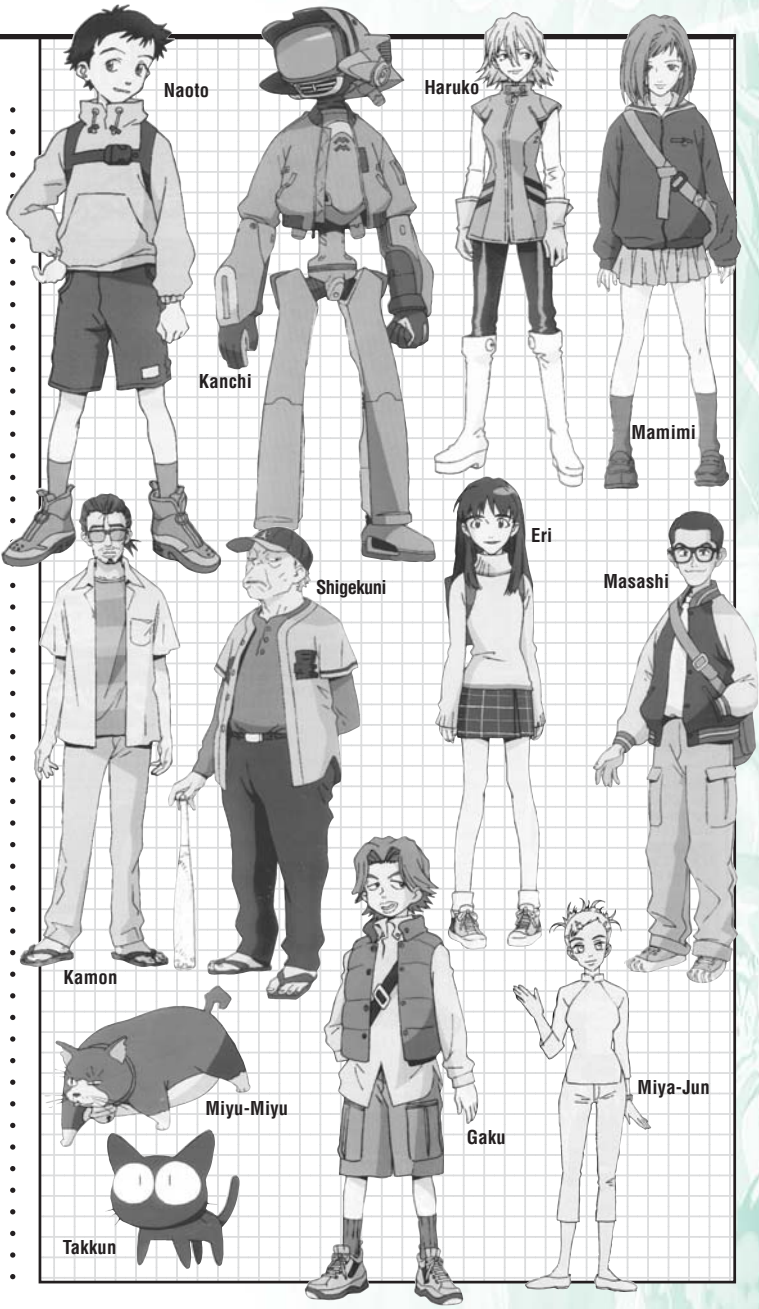
**Miyaji Junko (Miya-Jun)**: Miya-Jun is Naota's slightly neurotic and overly dramatic elementary school teacher.

**Takkun**: 4-month-old Takkun is the cat that Mamimi finds abandoned along the riverbed.

**Miyu-Miyu**: Miyu-Miyu is Naota's fat cat who has a very blunt personality.

**Amarao**: Amarao is a special agent of the Bureau of Interstellar Immigration. He apparently has some past with Haruko and claims to know who or what she really is. Amarao's childhood also seems to mirror that of Naota's. [Not Illustrated]

**Kitsurubami**: An agent of Amarao's, Kitsurubami is a healthy young woman who worries about her boss's eyebrows. [Not Illustrated]




## FLCL (DVD), VOL. 1: FOOLY COOLY ★★★☆

This OVA series is Studio Gainax on drugs! It looks like Hideaki Anno's style, but it was directed by Kazuya Tsurumaki. It is obviously made to please a new generation of hyper-fans. It is foolish and cool. Indeed, it was very popular. Strangely, it offers the same kind of stuff that fans hated in *Evangelion*: clueless main character, still shots, animated "manga scenes", introspection, etc. But it is quite funny and entertaining. However, despite the slapstick, it reflects the uneasiness of modern society where unhappy, selfish characters have complicated relationships. A wacky, weird anime, sometimes difficult to follow and even disturbing. You'll love it or you'll hate it. See also PA#65: 54. [Reviewed by CJP].

FLCL (Fooly Cooly) Vol. 1, IG Video/Synch-Point, Bilingual DVD, 60 min., $29.98, avail. on 3/20/02 [vol. 2 will be avail. on 4/20 and Vol. 3 on 5/31], 13+

| Designs: | 3 | Animation: | 4 | Soundtrack: | 3.5 | Story: | 3 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | 3.5 |
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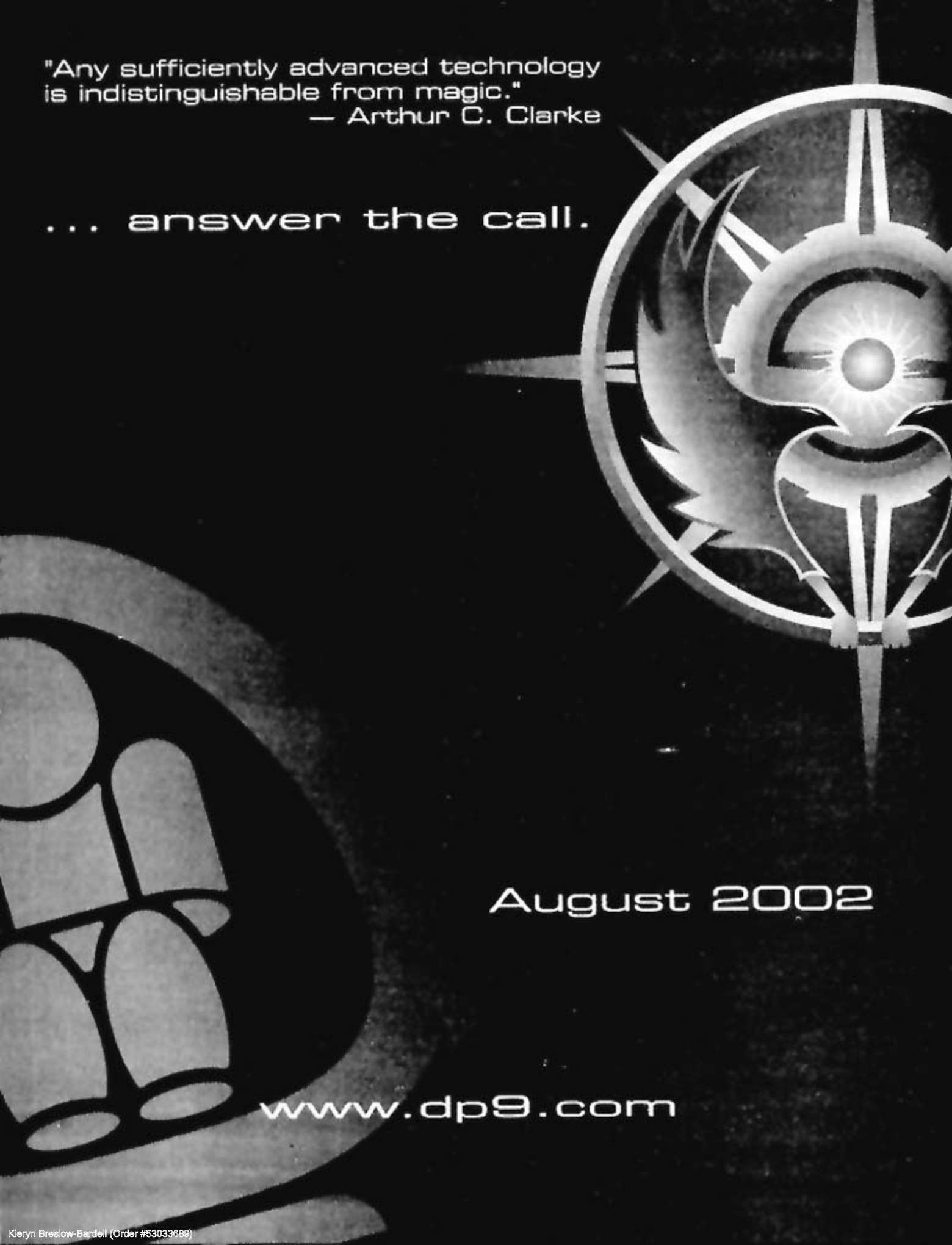

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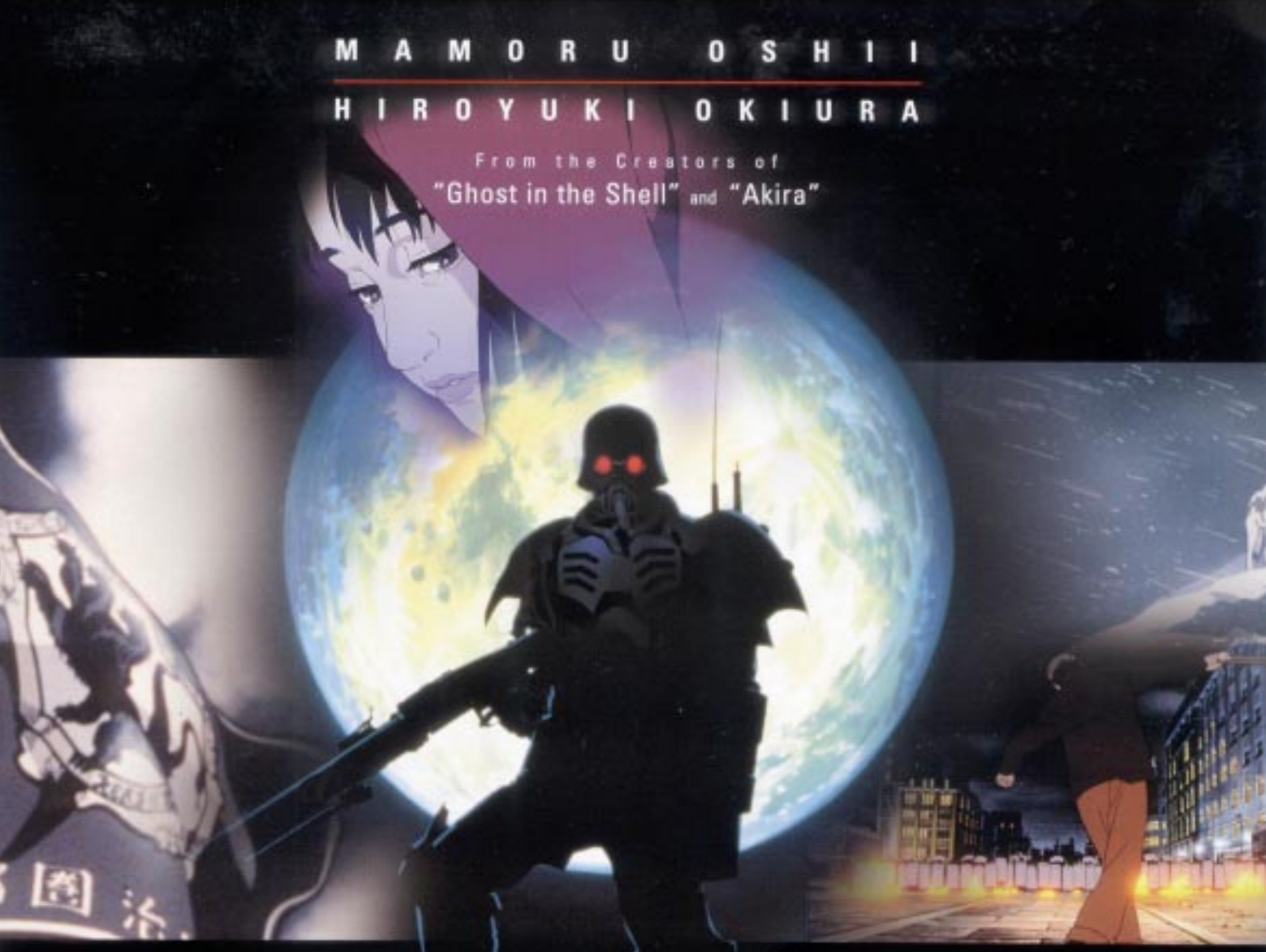


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*Anime: A Guide To Japanese Animation* (anime filmography, 1958-1988, 320 pg., B&W, $25).

## Protoculture Magazines

*PA* subscription (6 issues, S&H incl., $30 US/Can; $45 US overseas); PA# 8-9, 12-13, 25-26, 29-32, 34, 36-38, 41, 59, MP# 1.0, 7-9, 15 (rare issues, $10 ea.); PA# 11, 15 ($2.50 ea), PA# 16-21 ($3.50 ea), PA# 22-23 ($3.95 ea), PA# 28, 35, 39-40, 42-58, 60-69+ ($4.95 ea), PAX #1 (Best Of PA, $4.95), *Anime Shower Special* #2 (Mature Readers, $2.75), *Mecha Press* # 6, 14, 17 ($4.95 ea).

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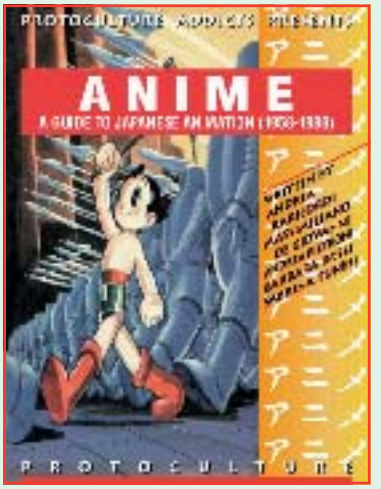


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Published by Protoculture; written by Andrea Baricordi, Massimiliano De Giovanni, Andrea Pietroni, Barbara Rossi, and Sabrina Tunesi; translated from the Italian by Adeline D'Opera. Edited & presented by *Protoculture Addicts*' staff. 320 pages, B&W, 1238 notices, fully indexed. ISBN 2-9805759-0-9. $25.00 US/Can.

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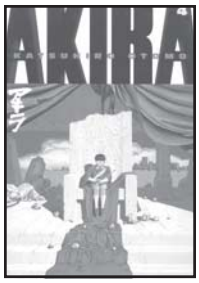
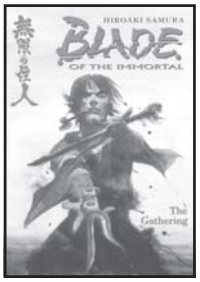



**Akira GN #4.** Otomo's masterpiece saga continues its trip into the chaos of Neo-Tokyo, where Akira, now under the watchful (and somewhat fearful) eye of Tetsuo, has become the new Messiah of the Great Tokyo Empire. Meanwhile, Kei and Chiyoko are trying to get the psychic children Kiyoko and Masaru to the safety of Lady Miyako's lair. But where is Kaneda?... Lots of action, lots of story and lots of pages (more than 400!). A must for all serious manga collectors! Dark Horse Comics, Story & art by Katsuhiro Otomo, 404 pg., B & W, $27.95 US/ $41.95 CAN. ★★★★☆

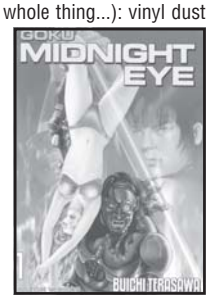
**Aquarium GN.** A lot of people would consider this title a "Girl's Comic". However, I must say that I consider *Aquarium* to be more a "Hopeless Romantic Comic" than anything else. Ladies, this is the kind of stuff your boyfriend or husband WILL read behind your back and then act as if he hasn't seen it around. The art is pretty enough (Taniguchi can draw incredibly expressive characters), but the stories are wonderfully romantic, especially the third story, *The Heart Is Your Kingdom* . To read even if you think you're not a "Hopeless Romantic"... CPM Manga, Story & art by Tomoko Taniguchi, 204 pg., B & W, $15.95 US. ★★★★

**Astra #1.** One of the selling lines of this "manga" is that it was created by Jerry Robinson, the man who gave us the Joker, Batman's most fearsome nemesis. However, this is not a guarantee of quality. The art is very so-so and the story is full of clichés. Let us hope that issue #2 will be better... [By the way, "manga" conventionally stands for "Japanese Comics;" if it is not done by a Japanese artist it is not "manga" but "manga-style comics" — CJP] CPM Manga, Story by Jerry Robinson, Art by Shojin Tanaka, 36 pg., B & W, $2.95 US. ★★




**Blade Of The Immortal GN #8: The Gathering.** Manji and Rin are in deep trouble: Shira has disappeared and accused them of the murders he committed in the previous volume! Now their faces are on "wanted" posters all over the place and they will never be able to go to Kaga to kill Anotsu. However, thanks to some kind help from Hyakurin (yeah, right...), they have each, more or less, found a way to get through the Sekicho (checkpoint). This is when Manji, now alone (Rin has left for Kaga without him, much to his surprise and displeasure), has to face three members of the Itto-ryu who want to put his rumored immortality to the test... One of the best manga we have ever read... Dark Horse Comics, Story & art by Hiroaki Samura, 200+ pg., B & W, $15.95 US/ $23.95 CAN. ★★★★☆

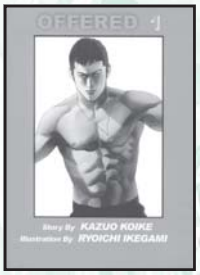
**Clover GN #1**. If you like CLAMP, this is a title you should not miss, if only because the art is magnificent. However, even after re-reading the story more than once, we still find it hard to understand. Maybe it is just us, though. The amazing thing about this title is that Tokyo Pop, bless them, reproduced the original Japanese GN high quality as much as it was humanely possible (even if they flipped the whole thing...): vinyl dust cover, color pages, English AND Japanese text, etc. And the printing quality is superb... Tokyo Pop Manga, Story & art by CLAMP, 132 pg., B & W, $14.95 US. ★★★★



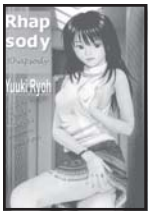

**Goku Midnight Eye, Vol. 1.** This is another "Kitsch Action" manga by Buichi Terasawa, *Cobra* 's creator and master of the testosterone-driven heroes. If you like your women-in-distress busty, naked and willing, your heroes manly (WAY too manly...) and your stories completely cliché, then this is for you. Sometimes, primitive and shallow is fun. Terasawa proved it more than once! For Mature Readers. Comics One, Story & art by Buichi Terasawa, 292 pg., B & W, ISBN 1-58899-123-7, $11.95 US/ $17.95 CAN. ★★☆

**Juline GN #2.** Although Narumi Kakinouchi is well known for her somewhat dreamy (and a little hard to follow...) *Vampire Princess Miyu* , she is also capable of doing some pretty cool Ninja/ Martial Arts stories that are not TOO hard to follow. *Juline* recounts the battles of the young Princess of the Kenga clan against the evil Black Pearl clan and her efforts to find her father, who disappeared years ago. This is one of Kakinouchi's most recent works. Tokyo Pop Manga, Story & art by Narumi Kakinouchi, 172 pg., B & W, $12.95 US. ★★★☆

**Magic Knight Rayearth GN #5.** This is the second book of what is, in fact, *Magic Knight Rayearth 2* . Unfortunately, the second part is far from being as good as the first, its story being too needlessly complex. There is also the fact that the first part's masterful ending made it difficult to create a follow up worthy of the first *Rayearth* 's mystique. After all, *Rayearth* was one of the works that bridged Shojo and Shonen manga in the early 1990's. Despite all this, the art is still magnificent (even if the printing is not that great and the color section is gone in this English edition) and this is an important manga work... Tokyo Pop Manga, Story & art by CLAMP, 218 pg., B & W, $12.95 US. ★★★☆




**Offered, Vol. 1.** With such talent as Kazuo Koike (*Lone Wolf & Cub* ) for the writing and Ryoichi Ikegami (*Crying Freeman, Sanctuary* ) for the art, we thought this title would be better. Ikegami's art is excellent as always, it is just that the story delves in "More Than Improbable" territory, as it asks for way too much suspension of disbelief. Lots of violence, sex, naked women and testosterone, but not much of a (believable...) story... For Mature Readers. Comics One, Story by Kazuo Koike, Art by Ryoichi Ikegami, 420 pg., B & W, ISBN 1-58899-117-2, $14.95/ $22.50. ★★★




**Rhapsody GN.** Yet another "juicy" Hentai manga. However, this one, unlike *Dimples Down Below* , which only dealt with brief sexual encounters, concentrates on the incestuous relationship between a brother and a sister. The art is not bad at all, but the story is a little too wild for our taste. But, if you like that kind of stuff, this is one you should get. Just keep it away from your little brother... For Mature Readers. Redlight Manga, Story & art by Yuuki Ryoh, 166 pg., B & W, ISBN 1-59023-006-X, $14.95 US/ $22.50 CAN. ★★★☆

**Sarai, Vol. 2-4.** Sarai continues her trek in a ruined world where people die at seventeen. The story is somewhat confused and does not really get anywhere (moreover, the Katana-wielding "Guard Maid" concept is pushing it a little too far in the "Suspension Of Disbelief" department...), but there is a lot of action and the art is nice. For Mature Readers. Comics One, Story & art by Masahiro Shibata, 200+ pg. ea., B & W, $9.95 US/ $14.95 CAN ea. ★★☆

**Sorcerer Hunters GN #5.** Although the anime series is relatively good, we must say that we find the manga MUCH BETTER! The stories in the manga are pretty much the same as in the anime (although we do not know which of the two came first...), but they are much wilder and the way they are drawn much funnier. Maybe the anime adaptation was not done right or toned down too much... For Mature Readers. Tokyo Pop Manga, Story & art by Satoru Akahori & Ray Omishi, 104 pg., B & W, $12.95 US. ★★★☆

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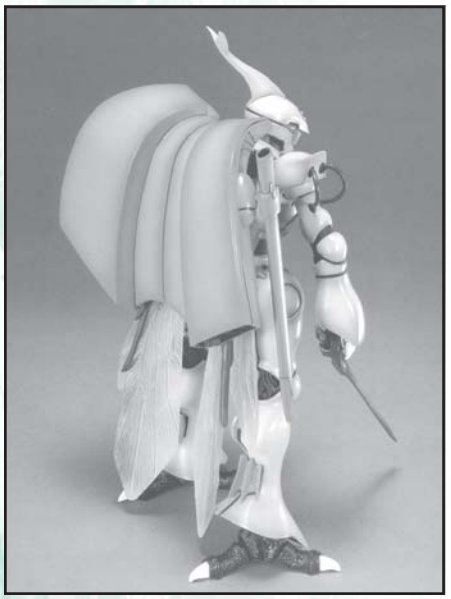
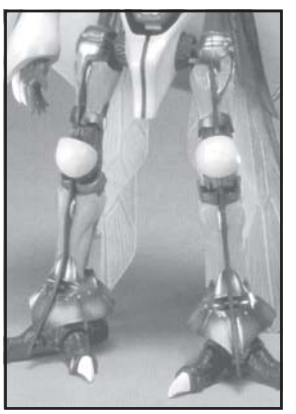
# AURA BATTLER DUNBINE ("SHO ZAMA") MASTER GRADE 1/35 BY BANDAI



We had never thought we would see this day! A little more than a year ago, Bandai finally decided to release a 1/35 scale Master Grade kit of the Aura Battler Dunbine (if you want to know more about this mecha or the show of the same name, see our Feature Articles in PA #60 and 61), the main mecha of the 1983 *Aura Battler Dunbine* TV series, created and directed by none other than Yoshiyuki "Father Of Gundam" Tomino. While Bandai had produced an entire line of *Dunbine* plastic injection kits in the early 1980's, the molding technology of the time had not given them the possibility of faithfully reproducing the Aura Battlers' complex shapes as they had been designed by Yutaka Izubuchi (*Patlabor* ,*Gundam* ). In fact, most of the completed kits looked like squat, Super Deformed versions of Izubuchi's designs and, as such, could not be considered a success. About two years ago, Bandai, pushed by the arrival of a new *Aura Battler Dunbine* RPG video game for the Sony Playstation and the re-release of the TV series in LD and DVD, decided to release a new line of 1/72 HG Aura Battlers. The kits, with re-designs by Izubuchi himself, were very nicely done (except for the Zwarth, which is very probably impossible to do correctly as a plastic injection, free-standing kit anyway...), with good molding and details, really worthy of Bandai's "HG" logo. However, a large scale kit was missing from the lineup and Bandai decided to make the Dunbine their first non-*Gundam* Master Grade kit (Cat.# 0077173). We will now review the result for you and, we hope, convince the *Dunbine* fans who have been hoping for a cool *ABD* model/ Action Figure to go buy this really great kit...

First, some statistics. Price: ¥3,500 (around $30 US), Scale: 1/35, Total Height: 9", Width: 3 3/4" (shoulders), Length (at torso height): 3 1/2", Wing span: over 12". There are 258 parts (including screws), molded in the following colors: black, very light purple (or lilac, if you prefer), light blue, flash pink and dark green for the opaque colors, while the clear parts are molded in semi-translucent yellow (wings), white (the claws), pink (for the eyes) and crystal dark green (cockpit hatches). The kit uses no less than 7 different kinds of plastics and rubbers. The skeleton is, as many MG kits today, in ABS, and the armor plating is in standard injection plastic (styrene), while the interior detail parts (muscles, Aura converters, the "Brain", etc.) are in a new material reminiscent of rubber, but harder (feels like "Bazooka" chewing gum!). The joints and cables are in very soft black rubber, while the wings, hands and flash pink exterior parts are in flexible plastic. There is only a very small sheet of decals for the yellow head details and the cockpit screens and two scale figures of Sho Zama (one seated for the cockpit and one standing up) are included, as well as two sets of opened hands (no fists, though), two Auto-Cannon Pods and a sword...



As for the assembly, some warning is necessary: this was NOT an easy kit to do, even for us! The black rubber parts are rather hard to trim correctly and are covered with a release agent similar to wax that is just about impossible to remove, the screws given with the kit are as flimsy as possible (be VERY careful, you do not get a second try with them!). Some of the ABS parts are rather thin and can be easily warped (ooops!) if too much torque is applied. Also, do pay attention to the order of assembly (part H3 goes in after part H2, don't be a smart aleck!...). And be patient when you install the shoulder cables, they can drive you berserk (arrgh! Kill, kill!)...

However, the perks of this kit are numerous. The fit of the parts, even the rubber ones, is unbelievable, the ABS skeleton and joints make the whole thing quite sturdy and VERY stable (no wobbling in the knees), yet flexible and relatively easy to pose. Of course, the molding is very crisp and the slight imperfections in

Kenyn Bosley Bardell (Order #56033683)

# AURA BATTLER DUNBINE ("SHO ZAMA") MG 1/35 BY BANDAI (Continued)

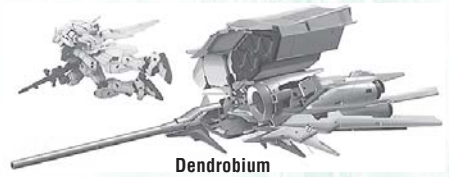
the armor plating give the kit this "organic" look the ABs are supposed to have. The exceptionally well molded cockpit doors open to reveal a well detailed cockpit (perfectionists can still do some work, though), while the armor on the head and legs is removable and the Flight Pack can be opened to show the Aura Converter engines. Appearance-wise, Izubuchi's re-design is superb, giving us a slightly thinner, more athletic Dunbine, somewhat reminiscent of the mechanical designer's Aura Battler Sirbine, seen in the 1988 OVA series *Aura Battler Dunbine: The Tale Of Neo-Byston Well* and in the *Aura Phantasm* book. By the way, one of the Dengeki Hobby Magazine (Media Works) of 2001 had a sheet of decoration stickers especially designed for the MG Dunbine...

**Pros:** A superb kit that renders Izubuchi's corrected design in all its splendor. A sturdy ABS skeleton makes sure it won't fall on its face and the use of many grades and colors of plastic to reproduce as much detail as precisely as possible.

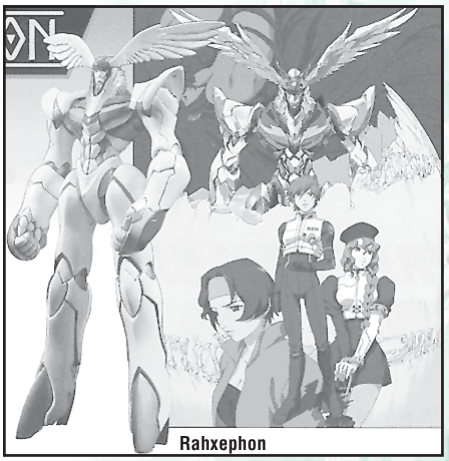
**Cons:** Somewhat difficult to assemble. The pink rubber parts have to be painted to look like they do in the photos. The price is a little high.

In short, if you have always wanted a really cool kit of the Dunbine, the 1/35 MG is the way to go...

| Complexity: **Advanced** | Molding: **4.5** | Fit: **4.5** | Posability: **4** | Accuracy: **4.5** | Average: **4.5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|



Dendrobium



Rahxephon

# — MODEL NEWS — MODEL NEWS — MODEL NEWS —

## Next EX Model Kit

The next EX Model Bandai will release will be the **1/144 Jet Core Booster** from *08TH MS Team*. This is the Core Booster seen in episodes #7 and #10. For those who do not know what "EX Models" are, they are Bandai's own version of a Garage Kit: limited production, plastic injected and VERY costly. The quality of detail is not bad at all. This one will go for ¥3,000 and will be released in March.

## Next Gundam MG Kits

Bandai has announced their lineup of 1/100 Master Grade *Gundam* kits the first 1/4 of 2002. The first will be the ***Master Gundam*** from G-Gundam. It will cost ¥2,800 and should be released in March 2002. THe next kit is something a lot of hardcore fans had been waiting for: the **MS-06 Zaku II F2 "Zeon Version"** (the green one. A tan Federal version will probably follow) from *Gundam 0083* ! It will go for ¥3,000 and will be released in April. This probably means that we WILL get an MG Dom Tropen and a GM C!

## Next HGUC kits

Bandai has made fools out of us yet again! Their next HGUC kit is the *Gundam 0083* **MS-09F Dom Tropen "Sand Brown" version**! And guess what? All the weapons that were missing in the first Dom Tropen kit are included! We can grumble all we want, but we'll buy... This new Dom Tropen will have been released by the time you read this and cost ¥1,600 (¥100 more than the first kit...). The April HGUC release is A LOT more interesting! It will be the **MSA-0011[Ext] EX-S Gundam**, one of the kits all *Gundam Sentinel* freaks had been waiting for! Of course, it will not transform, but who cares? It will go for ¥2,500, a hefty price for a 1/144 kit...

## Next Patlabor 1/35 MG Kit

The next *Patlabor* Master Grade will be the **Griffon labor**! However, this is going to be the "Aqua Version" (the one with the underwater propulsion pods). Bandai are not stupid, they knew that they would not sell this version if they released it after the winged version, the one everybody was hoping for! The "Aqua Version" will go for ¥3,500 and be released in March of this year...

## The Biggest (and scariest) Ever...

We never thought Bandai would do it (people on the Net who thought it possible were consistently laughed at and insulted...), but they will do it: they will release, in March 2002, their biggest and costliest plastic injection kit ever: a **1/144 HGUC RX-78GP03 Dendrobium** from *Gundam 0083* ! Yes, by that, we mean the MS AND the Orchis Platform. At 40 inches long (with the Mega-Beam Cannon) and ¥25,200 (that is about $250 US base price folks!), you better have a lot of place and a lot of cash to get this one. The only thing missing is a 1/144 HGUC Neue-Ziel. Or they could go for a 1/100 Master Grade Dendrobium...

## The Costliest Action Figure Ever...

Another interesting "Luxury" item is the **1/100 Metal Grade RX-78**. This full-action figure is, as its name indicates, entirely in metal and comes with photo-etched metal parts. At ¥38,000 (about $380 US), we are sure that you will be happy to know that your figure is shipped to you in a foam-lined aluminum briefcase (no extra charges for the briefcase. Lucky you!)...

## The New Kid On The Block...

One of the new "Giant Robot" shows of this season is *Rahxephon*, directed by Yutaka Izubuchi, mecha designer of *Patlabor* and *Gundam* , as well as Character Designer for the *Record Of Lodoss War* OVA. This will be the first time Izubuchi directs, so good luck to him! Of course, Bandai will release a (non-scale) kit of the main robot (named Rahxephon...). It will be released in April 2002 and will go for ¥1,800. The design is nice, but rather weird and overdone...

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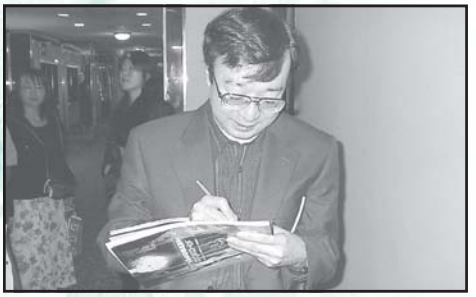
Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# BAAF (2): ANECDOTES FROM YUJI MORIYAMA



Mr. Yuji Moriyama was a guest of honour at the Big Apple Anime Fest 2001 and on October 27th he came out to meet and talk with the fans at a panel. This is a report of what was discussed for the readers unable to attend and hear his funny anecdotes in person.

Moriyama is the character designer for one of the top rated anime shows in Japan today, *Gensou Maden Saiyuki*. The title originally meant "The journey to the occident," since it was based on the Chinese novel of the same title, but crewmembers and the manga artist changed it to "The Most Pleasurable Record!" probably because of its bishonen (beautiful boy) characters. Moriyama said, "This is my latest work with Studio Pierrot and it is chock full of gun action sequences. There are over 50 television episodes already and thanks to its great popularity, it also became a feature film released this past summer. Because of all the bishonen characters, the audience is about 90% female. We purposely targeted the female audience and it seems to have paid off. As for the movie, we only had 6 months to create it and it was a difficult task for the crew. However, thanks to the great fan support we managed to pull through. I hope viewers will enjoy it very much."

Moriyama has been in the Japanese anime industry for a long time, going back as far as *Star Blazers* (*Space Cruiser Yamato*). He said, "I turned 18 and I really decided that the anime industry was going to be my profession. In 1982, when I was 22, I was selected to become art director for the *Urusei Yatsura* TV series. At that time the show was directed by Mamoru Oshii (*Ghost in the Shell*, *Avalon*) and he let the other staff and myself work very freely and with very few limits. We really liked that way of working. At 24, the *Project A-ko* series came and I really feel that this show was the best example of the freedom I was expressing. With the other staff I was able do the things we really wanted to and have a lot of fun doing it! We never thought *Project A-ko* would become so popular and we were pleasantly surprised. As for me, I wrote most of the story for the *A-ko* series."

When he began his career in the anime industry he said that he learned the ropes as an animator just like everyone else, sitting and drawing all day in the studio. These days he no longer wants to work under someone else's supervision, so he became an anime director to avoid that problem. One of his more recent works is *Geobreeders*, which is a two-fisted action comedy.

Enjoying his work immensely Moriyama said, "As for *Geobreeders*, the manga artist really loves guns and action scenes. In order for us to make it more realistic, the crew and I visited the Japanese Defense Force and they were quite helpful in providing us with information. As you may know, most youth don't know anything about the military, and that includes young animators. So we did our best to realistically portray the action with guns and tanks, but still the scenes may look odd to someone who knows better. This year the new *Geobreeders* series debuted and the president of the anime company loves to visit hot springs — I think it really shows! We have done lots of bath scenes to showcase many cute girls. It seems the sponsors think that I love to insert all those cute girls into my work and they keep asking me to come up with excuses for showing these bathing scenes. Well, I'm not the only one, you know? For example, director Hideaki Anno (of *Evangelion*) purposely put in bath scenes in *Gunbuster* to raise the attention of the male viewers. We tend to always put in bath scenes. In the name of research we would go visit hot springs here and there. Aside from the bath scenes, the 2nd series of *Geobreeders* also offers lots of computer animation. I feel that this is really improving the images. The sponsors were a bit angry since we ran over-budget, but as long as I keep putting in the cute girls they seem to be happy — despite the fact we spent more than we should have."

For Moriyama, the Big Apple Anime Fest was his second stateside appearance. While creating his works, pleasing North American audiences was the furthest thing from his mind, but upon arriving in the US and seeing all the enthusiastic Japanimation fans at the convention, he was extremely happy and quite surprised. One fan asked him what was the most enjoyable work he had ever done and he answered, "I've worked on so many shows, but *Project A-ko* was the most memorable and enjoyable because we really did do everything we wanted to do!"

His latest work is as supervising director of *Saiyuki* that he really wants viewers to enjoy. Let's hope *Saiyuki* comes to North America soon, despite its large number of episodes. He did a sketch of Genjo Sanzo for the readers of PA. Thank you Moriyama-san and please keep up your good work.

Kieryn Beesley-Bardell (Order #56035683)

# MONTREAL WORLD FILM FESTIVAL (PART 3): MORE JAPANESE MOVIES!

## Mabu Dachi (Bad Company)

This movie's story takes place in a small town in Nagano Prefecture in Central Japan (lots of high mountains) and the main characters are restless troublemaker middle school students. One leader, Sadamoto, really hates the schoolteacher who abuses his authority and subjects the students to total humiliation. I'm not quite sure what the reaction would be for North American viewers when they see such a teacher, even if it's in a movie. Is this a form of psychological abuse? The title is *Bad Company*, but if children are subjected to such conditions, is it any wonder that they end up as juvenile delinquents? Director Tomoyuki Furuyama tells the story gradually, revealing each character's psychological development and helplessness. One of the bad company members (well, he's not truly bad, just a little slow) kills himself to be free from the teacher's authoritarianism. The movie may not be much in entertainment value, but it surely shows some of the problems facing student/teacher relationships in Japanese schools today. An educational film for North Americans to see how abusive some Japanese teachers can be. You may start wondering, "Which is worse, the teachers or the students?" ★★★

Japan, 2001, 98 min., Dir./Scr.: Tomoyuki Furumaya; Phot.: Masami Inomoto; Ed.: Shuichi Kakesu; Mus.: Masamichi Shigeno; Prod.: Takenori Sento, Suncent CinemaWorks; Cast: Yamato Okitsu, Ryosuke Takahashi, Yuta Nakajima, Ken Mitsuishi, Asako Yashiro, Mikio Shimizu. North American Premiere.

## On the Way

*On the Way*, is in its way, a truly international production. Even though it is directed by Korean born Jae Eun Choi, the crewmembers are from many countries and the sponsors are Japan and Korea. An old man (played by Manfred Otto, who was born in Germany in 1937) recalls the horrors of the 20th century, such as WWII and Auschwitz and the Korean War, while travelling. As the film begins, images from the past century play across the screen, slowly and peacefully with poetry narrated by David Toop and calm music by Haruomi Hosono (a former member of Japan's legendary techno-pop group Yellow Magic Orchestra — another member, Ryuichi Sakamoto is a renowned actor/musician in his own right). What a calm, peaceful film. The main theme of the film is "why do people draw borders?" Why do we have to kill each other? In the name of race religion, economics, territory and politics? Let's hope that we are "On the Way" to becoming one nation of humanity so that in the future we can all share the world peacefully, as plants and animals do, without borders. Too idealistic? Maybe, but don't lose hope! ★★☆

Japan / South Korea / Germany, 2000, 70 min., Dir.: **Jae Eun Choi** (she moved to Japan in '76 and studied art there until '80; this movie is her directorial debut); Scr.: Keiko Nakamura, Jae Eun Choi; Phot.: Hans Rombach; Ed.: Jae Eun Choi; Mus.: Haruomi Hosono, Hisaya Macabe; Prod.: Studio Jae Eun Choi (www.jae-eun-choi.com); Nar.: David Toop; Cast: Manfred Otto. North American Premiere.

## Orozco El Embalsamador (Orozco, the make-up artist for the dead)

Did you know that in Japan there is a movie genre called Shock-umentary? Well, it is a documentary, but it is too disturbing for most people to watch. V & R Planning, a company that specializes in adult video series, also has released "shock-umentaries" such as the infamous (and for the most part faked) *Faces of Death and Death File* to shock people! What is more shocking? That people want to watch this stuff! Here *Orozco El Embalsamador* was shot by young Japanese shock-umentary film director Kiyotaka Tsurisaki who went to Bogota, Columbia, where daily murders are a fact of life due to the drug wars. Outwardly, Columbia is a so-called democratic Latin American nation, but it is highly unstable and violent right now. The man here, Froilan Orozco Duarte, murdered people to survive and then became "El Embalsamador" to clean up corpses and practice the art of embalming. Colombia appears to be the most dangerous place to live in the Western Hemisphere (men have killed each other so much that now 60% of the population is female). It might be interesting for some people to watch the embalming scenes, but please be prepared! You'll be shocked by the horrible reality of Colombia and you won't be able to eat after watching. Rest in Peace for the dead. ★★

Japan / Colombia, 2001, 84 min., Dir.: **Tsurisaki Kiyotaka** (he directed S&M movies, did coprses photography, but this is his first feature-length film); Phot.: Tsurisaki Kiyotaka, Alváro Fernandez Bonilla; Ed.: Tsurisaki Kiyotaka; Mus.: Tanaka Tomonori, Tsurisaki Kiyotaka; Prod.: Tsurisaki Kiyotaka / V&R Planning. North American Premiere.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# MWFF (PART 3): MORE JAPANESE MOVIES! (Continued)

## *Rendan* (Quartet for Two)

Many Japanese actors are directors too, and Naoto Takenaka is no exception! This movie, his 4th as a director, is about the collapse of a family due to an ugly divorce. However, when viewers watch *Rendan*, we get a taste of the comedy of director Takenaka (he plays the father, Mr. Sasaki) despite the heavy theme of divorce. His film work seems very kind and gentle and full of merciful love — with lots of movie properties (one can enjoy the small details of everyday life). Divorce may be a common, sad fact of life in North America, but it's still fairly rare in Japan. There are four major players here (father, mother, daughter and son) and one will feel empathy towards them all as they cope with the familie's imminent collapse. And yet the story is told in a comical manner. Some critics have voiced the opinion that this film is just *Kramer vs. Kramer* ala Japonaise, but it surely shows the reflection of the times in contemporary Japan. Director Shinja Tsukamoto (*Tetsuo*, *Bullet Ballet*) does a cameo as well. The mother, Minako, is torn between her children and her lover and is played by actress Yuki Amami. The ending at least leaves a little bit of hope that the family will continue on as friends. ★★★★☆

Japan, 2000, 104 min., Dir.: Naoto Takenaka; Scr.: Maruo Kuozuka; Phot.: Yasushi Sasakibara; Ed.: Yoshiyuki Okuhara; Mus.: Naoko Asari; Prod.: Hideshi Miyajima, Toshiaki Harada, Masaki Koga, Kiwamu Sato, Satoko Ishida / Shochiku; Cast: Naoto Takenaka, Yuki Amami, Keika Fukitsuka, Yuta Minowa, Mitsuhiro Oikawa. North American Premiere.

## *Shoujyo* (An Adolescent)

Eiji Okuda is one of Japan's top actors and he has made his directorial debut here with *An Adolescent*, starring himself as a cop named Tomokawa. The story takes place in the countryside of Aichi Prefecture where a cop can afford to be a bit lazy and easygoing (it's a quiet place so there's not much to do) and one day he is approached by a 15 year-old junior high student named Yoko to have sex. Then his past comes to light. He himself was once a juvenile delinquent and he becomes involved with Yoko, who's the granddaughter of a tattoo artist. Yoko is played by newcomer Mayu Ozawa — she did a sensational job for a first role in a major film. The intense love of a middle-aged cop and a teenager might be shocking to some viewers (can a girl truly love someone like that at such an early age?), but basically this is a pure love story with emotionally wounded characters. It's touching to see a man and a woman (well, in this case she's still a girl) with beautiful tattoos of birds to symbolize their eternal love to fly together. A very deep love story. ★★★☆

Japan, 2001, 132 min., Dir.: **Eiji Okuda**; Scr.: Izuru Narushima, Katsuhiko Manabe (based on the novel by Mikihiko Renjyo); Phot.: Hirokazu Ishii; Mus.: Shigeru Umebayashi; Prod.: Eiji Okuda, Zero Pictures; Cast: Eiji Okuda (Tomokawa), Mayu Ozawa (Yoko), Akira Shoji (Sukemasa), Mari Natsuki (Yukie), Hideo Murota (Syozo). North American Premiere.

## Unloved

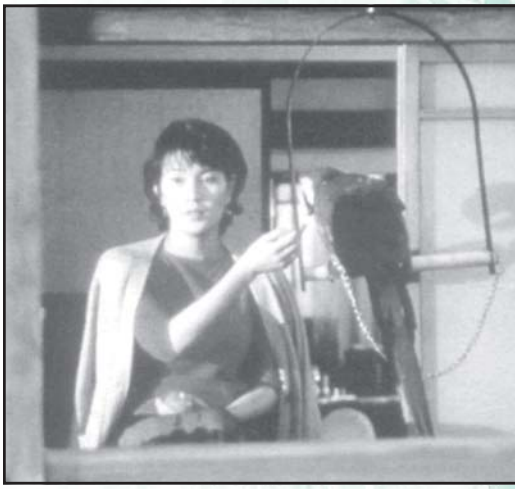
Contemporary Japanese cinema's trend seems to be asking, "What is your happiness?" This film, directed by Kunitoshi Manda, really asks this question. For a movie, it may be a bit slow for some viewers as it's like a nice play in a live theatre. A young (but already well over 30 and still single) woman named Mitsuko is very much content with what she has — a steady job at city hall and a carefree life living alone in her apartment. She really doesn't seem to mind that her younger colleagues keep moving up and leaving her behind. She knows who she is and likes being where she is. One day, this balance is shaken when she is asked on a date by a young, handsome and successful businessman who wants to change her (by bringing her into his lifestyle). She breaks off the relationship. Instead, she goes out with her neighbour Hiroshi with whom she feels much more comfortable. After some serious dialogue, the viewer will feel like they have watched a theatrical play. And who is "unloved" here? The successful businessman who looks down on others, including the women he dates? An interesting film to ask ourselves "Are we content?" ★★★

Japan, 2001, 117 min., Dir.: Kunitoshi Manda (he directed TV dramas but this is his first feature-length film); Scr.: Kunitoshi Manda, Tamami Manda; Phot.: Akiko Ashizawa; Ed.: Syuichi Kaesu; Mus.: Kenji Kawai; Prod.: Sento Takenori, Suncent CinemaWorks; Cast: Yuko Moriguchi; Toru Nakamura; Shunsuke Matusoka. North American Premiere.

Kenyn Brostrom Bardell Quinn #56033633

# MWFF (PART 3): MORE JAPANESE MOVIES! (Continued)

## *Akai Hashi no Shita no Nurui Mizu* (Warm Water Under a Red Bridge)



This latest film by director Shohei Imamura is a Japan/France co-production (shown with French sub-titles). I was pleasantly surprised to see the large turnout in the theatre — it was sold-out due to all of the French speaking Imamura fans! Imamura's past two films have been awarded the prestigious Palme D'or at the Cannes Film Festival, so obviously the audience's expectations would be very high. Central character Yusuke is played by Imamura's perennial actor Koji Yakusho (in *Eel*). He plays a victim of the Japanese recession, who lose his house and family (the wife took the kids to her hometown and wants a divorce). Then his close friend Taro, an old tramp that lives by the river, tells him an odd story... In fact, this is a really comical film, full of odd people, sex and a satire of today's Japan (Yusuke is quite typical — a very decent man who is victimized by a soured economy). Imamura's message seems to be "Adjust to whatever happens in your life and don't forget to have sex! Enjoy it while you're alive and have fun!" Taro's big laughter in the end really echoed! A fun film! ★★★★☆

Japan/France, 2001, 119 min., Dir.: Shohei Imamura; Scr.: Motofumi Tomikawa, Shohei Imamura; Phot.: Shigeru Kamatsubara; Ed.: Hajime Okayasu; Mus.: Shinichiro Ikebe; Prod.: Nikkatsu / Imamura Productions / BAP / Eisei Gekuo / Comme Des Cinémas / Catherine Dussart Productions. Cast: Koji Yakusho, Misa Shimizu, Mitsuko Baisho, Mansaku Fuwa, Kazyo Kitamura, Isao Natsuyagi, Yukiya Kitamura, Hijiri Kojima. North American Premiere.

## Delbaran

You may be wondering why an Iranian movie is being reviewed here in PA. This film was in fact, a co-production with the Japanese companies Office Kitano Inc. and Bandai Visual Co. Ltd. Producer/director Abolfazl Jalili is deeply admired in Japan as the "Mystery Man from Iran". I am still awe-struck at the strength of the Iranian movie industry because I'm sure that their situation has to be one of the worst in the world for creating films. Delbaran is the name of a small town near the border of Afghanistan. As we all know Afghanistan was in total chaos with the now toppled Taliban regime (who were in power since '96) that was terrorizing, torturing and killing its own people under the influence of their strict interpretation of Islam. The film is like a semi-docu-drama about a 14 year-old Afghan refugee named Kain, who escaped into Iran alone and became a servant boy at an isolated café and service station. Director Jalili wrote, "I'm dedicating this film to all the children of war." Poor Kain seems to be repressing his emotions; he hardly cries or laughs and yet he works extremely hard to please everyone and survive. Until recently (and even now, at least until things become more stable there) Afghanistan must have been one of the worst places for human rights abuses under the reign of the Taliban. An important social film, that has only become more relevant as time goes by. [Incredibly, the same night we saw *Delbaran*, we also saw on CNN the documentary "Under The Veil" about the abuses of women in Afghanistan. We commented that, as bad it was, since there is no economic interest, nobody would intervene to help the Afghan people against the Taliban. Less than three weeks later we were proven wrong! — CJP] ★★★

Iran/Japan, 2001, 96 min., Dir./Scr./Ed.: **Abolfazl Jalili**; Phot.: Mohammad Ahmadi; Prod.: Abolfazl Jalili, Fil,-e-Aval / Shozo Ichiyama, T. Mark / Office Kitano & Bandai Visual; Cast: Kaeem Alizadeh, Rahmatollah Ebrahimi, Hossein Hashemian, Ahmad Mahdavi. North American Premiere.

## Oba-chan's Garden

*Oba-chan* means grandmother in Japanese and this film is a docu-drama about Asayo Murakami, the grandmother of Japanese-Canadian filmmaker Linda Ohama. Do you take an interest in your ancestor's stories? Asayo-san is 103 years-old and lives in an old-age home. She came to Canada years ago as a picture bride (she later broke the contract and married Mr. Murakami) to escape her painful past, and she had to leave her two beloved girls due to a forced divorce by her mother-in-law. The Japanese/Canadian family members recently found all of this out and made a special trip to Japan to reunite her with her last surviving daughter after 75 years of separation! This film moves everyone to tears because fate and life can sometimes be so cruel, but you will feel so happy for Asayo in the end. The story from 1923 and today is like a "living-history" with director Ohama's beautiful images of Asayo's flower garden. As I watched this film financed by the National Film Board of Canada, I felt the tremendous importance to learn about the lives of ordinary people as a piece of history and say no to any war at any cost. Incredible endurance! ★★★★

Canada, 2001, 94 min., Dir./Scr.: Linda Ohama; Phot. Kirk Tougas; Ed.: Manfred Becker, Linda Ohama; Mus.: Dennis Burke; Prod.: Selwyn Jacob, Linda Ohama, National Film Board Of Canada (www.nfb.ca).

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# FANTASIA: *SÉANCE* [*Ko-Rei, The Soul Arrival*]

**Director Kiyoshi Kurosawa (below) signing autograph at the Imperial (above)**

On 18th July 2001 the movie *Séance* (which is of course one of those table meetings with a medium talking to ghosts) was presented by director Kiyoshi Kurosawa himself at the Imperial theatre, compelling the audience to experience a ghost story. Do you believe in ghosts? To this day I myself have not experienced anything or haven't seen any ghosts in my life, but do meet people who claim to have done so from time to time [a few writers here at the magazine have made such bold claims]. Kurosawa (not to be confused with the late, legendary Akira Kurosawa) had a hectic schedule of three days in Montreal, but during the Q&A session after the movie screening, he surely squeezed in lots of anecdotes!

This film is outwardly calm, but it grabs your heart with a thrilling experience. The story takes place in modern Japan and a middle aged childless couple, wife Junko and husband Koji, seem to be living an ordinary life together, except Junko isn't an ordinary housewife. She is a psychic medium. What is a medium, you ask? In Japan we call them Ko-rei-shi, someone who can call upon dead people to enter their bodies and talk through them, like Whoopi Goldberg in *Ghost*. These performances, or seances, allow people who wish to talk to the dead, especially precious loved ones who have, for whatever reason, passed away. Junko does her work in the house in front of private clients. She's not egomaniacal, but she really wants to be recognized and become famous for her power. Koji is a sound technician for a TV studio and they live in a big house in the suburbs of Tokyo, surrounded by rice fields, vegetable gardens, etc... Outwardly, it looks perfect for anyone wanting to live decently and very peacefully. Koji is very much in love with his wife and he'd do anything possible to make her happy.

Then one day, their lives are turned upside down against their intentions. In a way, I felt sympathy for them because every mishap that is thrown at them is not due to any fault of their own. A criminal psychopath kidnaps a little girl and the police come to see Junko for help. She thinks this is her chance to become famous as a medium if she can solve the whereabouts of the missing girl. She works with a psychology student and a teacher at the university. Koji then has to go to Mount Fuji to record wind sounds; the missing girl, having escaped from her kidnapper, finds his car and trunk and hides herself within. Koji goes back home unaware and when Junko senses something odd in the house, they discover the girl in the trunk. Instead of being honest and calling the police right away, Junko plots to claim she discovered the girl. Meanwhile, the girl succumbs from the effects of her ordeal and dies. Now the couple has to get involved in a criminal case. The ending indicates they had nowhere to go.

Starring Koji Yakusho (of *Shall We Dance?*) — now one of Japan's most popular and prolific actors — and Jun Fubuki, the movie is more psychological thriller than horror film. During the Q&A, director Kurosawa expressed some recollections. He said that he himself had never seen a ghost, but some friends who have said that ghosts normally appear in the corner of the room; when they are asked to leave (closing eyes may help too) they usually do so. But his friends have yet to touch one. Can we touch them? Are they hot, cold, or intangible? Have you every experienced anything like this?

In this film there are many personal statements on psychic powers, which might interest viewers. For instance Koji sees a vision of himself sitting on a chair and he gets scared, pouring gas on the chair to burn it up. Viewers might wonder why. Kurosawa said that he knew of a Russian story about Catherine the Great. She saw a vision of her sitting on a throne, but legend had it that if anyone saw such a vision it would mean she would die tragically. So she burnt the throne! But we all die sooner or later, even tomorrow or 50 years later — whenever the time comes. In general, Japanese ghosts don't seem to be aggressive; they tend to stay near the person, close and never leaving. There is a scene at a restaurant where Junko works and she sees a not-so-polite guy with a female ghost in a red dress (she ain't ever leaving him).

If some viewers believe in ghosts this movie could be very scary. The girl ghost never leaves until the couple literally dies. With superb directing, all the sequences make you think! A must see, for psycho-thriller fans. Personally I may be too practical to believe or be scared by ghosts and ghost stories!

Japan, 2000, 97 min., Dir.: **Kurosawa Kiyoshi**; Scr.: Onishi Tetsuya, Kurosawa Kiyoshi (based on the original work by Mark McShane); Phot.: Shibanushi Takahide; Ed.: Kikuchi Junichi; Prod. Des.: Maruo Tomoyuki; Sound: Ika Makio; Mus.: Ashiya Gary; Prod.: Simoda Atsuyuki; Exec. Prod.: Uemura Yasuyuki, Tanaka Takehiko; Cast: Yakusho Koji. Fubuki Jun, Kusanagi Teuyoshi; Kishibe Ittoku; Kitarou, Ishida Hikari. ★★★☆

Kieryn Dooley Bardell (Order #56033683)

# FANTASIA: EVEN MORE JAPANESE MOVIES!

## Ebirah: Horror of the Deep (aka Godzilla Vs the Sea Monster)

Well, the title says "horror of the deep", but for me it was more like "amusement of the deep" as I couldn't help laughing throughout the entire film! In most of his films, Godzilla normally stomps a large piece of Japanese real estate into waste, right? This time he's sleeping on an island somewhere in the Pacific Ocean where evil soldiers are guarding a nuclear plant and weapons. Fantasia presented the uncut version in a 35mm print with a different dub from the version currently available on video and perhaps TV. What is Ebirah? Ebi is shrimp in Japanese, so maybe now you can get an idea. It's a shrimp monster that is guarding the evil island of nuclear power from outsiders. And another bonus is the guest appearance of Mothra too! (3 major monsters in one film!). The characters that appear (such as the young man and his fisherman brother, a thief, an island beauty, happy, go-lucky boys and the evil soldiers that look like the infamous Nazi SS guards) are really colourful and I can say that this was one of the funniest *Godzilla* flicks I have ever seen! Highly recommended for SF and monster fans, especially if they want to watch an irreverent, comedic look on Japan's most famous export. Japan, 1966, 87 min., Dir.: Jun Fukuda; Scr.: Shinichi Sekizawa; Prod.: Toho; Cast: Akira Takarada, Toru Watanabe, Kumi Mizuno, Akihiko Hirata, Jun Tazaki. ★★★☆

## The Fuccon Family

This is actually a sketch from the TV show *Vermilion Pleasure Night* which is like a Japanese version of *Saturday Night Live* with a more risqué tone. The anthology sketch show is shown at midnight on the weekend in Japan and strangely, the characters are American (played by actors, or in the case of the Fuccon Family, mannequins) to poke satirical fun at Japanese society. The entire Fuccon Family cast is portrayed by store mannequins (except the dog — one hilarious scene is when Mickey takes him for a walk). Director Yoshimasa Ishibashi presented his work at Fantasia and answered questions — the more stupid the better. He said he bought the Fuccon mannequins (Papa James, Mama Barbara and their son Mickey) from the USA. There are 18 total episodes (8 were shown) and I was sitting and laughing from beginning to end — and talk about laughter! Every episode ends with the families bizarre, mechanically forced sounding laughter at inappropriate moments. It would be nice to see this get a proper release in North America and introduce others to this ludicrous humour. What is a typical American family like today anyway? The Fuccons look like a throwback to the 50's and dress like characters in *American Graffiti*. The mannequins also remind me of the text book characters when I was learning English during junior high. Scriptwriter Sakichi Sato has surely created a great, funny satire. It was shown with extracts of *Vermilion Pleasure Night* ("Katty's House") and several Japanese shorts (*Synapi* by Bak Ikeda, five unbearable shorts by Tenkwaku Naniwa and *Nekojiru-so* by Tatsuo Sato). Japan, 2001, 22 min., Dir.: Yoshimasa Ishibashi; Scr.: Sakichi Sato, Yoshimasa Ishibashi; Prod.: Masataka Izumi; Cast: Urara Urara, Chikako Majima, Hitoshi Tatano. ★★☆

Director Tomoya Sato (above)

## L'Ilya

This short film also made its debut as an international premiere at Fantasia and was hosted by director Tomoya Sato himself! Incidentally, the film won the Special Jury prize at the Yubari Fantastic Film Festival in Hokkaido, Japan. It's a very disturbing look at suicide. The main character, Ilya, is making a film about other people's suicides! She wants to capture deaths without any hint of her emotion or involvement in the lives of her "performers", but can she? She's also having serious communication problems with her live-in boyfriend, although outwardly they seem to get along. Then, one day, she's shocked to discover that he has killed himself in their apartment! Director Sato never places any moral judgement on this controversial subject (as we all know suicide is a great taboo in most societies). Despite the grim subject, the talent of his storytelling is worthy of mention. Why do some people have a fascination with death? Japan, 2000, 39 min., Dir./Scr.: Tomoya Sato; Cast: Shino Ogihara, Tasuku Yamanouchi, Ryoko Yukami. ★★★☆

## St. John's Wort (*Otogiri Sou*)

This horror film is an adaptation of the novel by Shukei Nagasaka and immerses viewers in a video-game horror experience, totally shot on video camera! It's bit like the American indie hit *The Blair Witch Project*, but it's not in the docu-drama style at all. As the story progresses, main character Nami brings her friends to the old mansion she has inherited a from her famous, artist father to make research for the video-game they are working on. There she will learns the awful and sick truth about her father... Director Ten Shimoyama is an original talent that is worth mentioning. The video camera work, quite annoying in the beginning, is very well done. It is entertaining, intelligent and sometime funny. This International premiere brought horror film buffs a totally new experience! *St. John's Wort* (here it's used as a herbal medicine to treat depression, by the way) is a flower that also symbolize "Revenge" (from the father's victims? The evil twin sister?). Recommended for horror film fans — experience the digital age horror! [MM/CJP] Japan, 2001, 85 min., Dir.: Ten Shimoyama; Scr.: Goro Nakajima, Takenori Sento; Phot.: Kazuhiko Ogura; Prod. Des.: Toshihiro Isomi; Sound: Senji Horiuchi; Mus.: Asako Yoshida; Prod.: Masato Hara (Kadokawa / Asmik / Suncent CinemaWorks); Cast: Megumi Okina (Nami/Naomi), Yoichiro Saito (Kohei), Koji Okura (Shinichi), Reiko Matsuo (Touko), Minoru Kaizawa (Souichi). ★★★★

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# FANTASIA: EVEN MORE ASIAN MOVIES!

## Visitor Q

I'm sure this North American premiere of *Visitor Q* at Fantasia shocked many of the audience with its barrage of ultra-grotesque scenes. You thought Pier Paulo Pasolini's films are grotesque? Then welcome to director Takashi Miike's *Visitor Q* which is surreal, ultra grotesque and shows the ugliest of the ugliest that you could imagine in human crimes. In a way, I can understand why Miike wanted to make such a detestable film... to show audiences a reflection of the ill's plaguing modern Japanese society (and yes, they're truly awful and criminally horrifying!). Visitor Q arrives at the home of this broken family (the father has an incestuous relationship with his daughter — who has become a prostitute on the street, the mother is physically abused by her own son who is in turn, bullied at school) and helps them out in such a way that things all come back together, and yet in such a forceful and aggressive way that you will never forget! The extreme obscenity may make some literally ill (what shock value, I tell you!), so if you choose to watch this film, you have been warned. Japan, 2001, 84 min., Dir.: Takashi Miike, Scr.: Era; Prod.: Susumu Nakajima, Reiko Arakawa, Seiichiro Kobayashi; Cast: Kenichi Endo, Shungiku Uchida, Kazushi Watanabe, Shoko Nakahara, Fujiko, Jun Muto, Iko Suzuki. ★★★☆

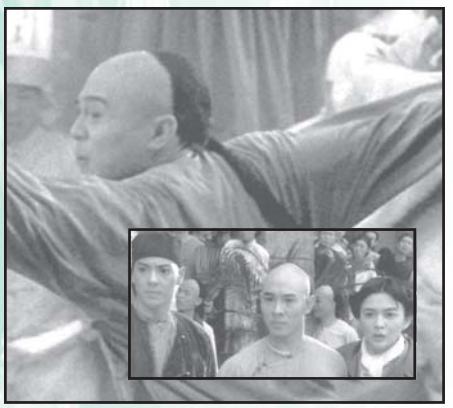
## HONG KONG MOVIES

### A War Named Desire

Are you a hard-boiled action movie fan? This B-movie from Hong Kong has plenty of shootouts set in exotic Thailand (with all the palm trees and all, I first thought it could have been in the area of Los Angeles as well) and you can discover Hong Kong's beautiful rising star, Gigi Leung! This is a tragic story of people in the Chinese Mafia who kill anyone who threatens his or her existence to protect their interests. Chun, a young man with a girlfriend, has an elder brother Charles living in Thailand (many outlaw gangsters end up there trying to escape from Hong Kong's law enforcement) and Chun really gets himself into big trouble, surrounded by criminals. The atmosphere is very dark with no-nonsense dirty violence from beginning to end! At least I felt better when the two siblings began to understand each other and started communicating after going through hell. Director Alan Mak's fast paced storytelling keeps you glued to the screen! Hong Kong, 2000, 89 min., Dir.: Alan Mak; Scr.: Joe Ma, Alan Mak, Clement Cheng; Prod.: Joe Ma; Cast: Francis Ng, Daniel Chan, Dave Wang, Gigi Leung, Sam Lee. ★★★☆

### Jiang Hu (The Triad Zone)

If you're looking for a film that offers hard crime, comedy, some touching drama and lots if action scenes in one place, *Jiang Hu* (in Chinese, the criminal groups social universe) is the one! Directed by Dante Lam, it's a unique film that made me laugh hard and yet cry with some of the touching scenes. The characters are all very colourful. Main character Jim Yam (played by Tony Leung Ka-Fai who has appeared with a major role in Jean Jacques Annaud's *The Lover*) and his wife Sophie surely have a passionate relationship that would make you envious! I also gasped to see a God, General Kwan (Anthony Wong), literally show up in front of the gangsters and save Jim Yam's life, dispense some moral words and then disappear — just like a joke in many Japanese manga stories. Superb photography and direction. This film is proof that, even with the return of Hong Kong to China, Hong Kong cinema is still alive and well. Hong Kong, 2000, 107 min., Dir.: Dante Lam; Scr.: Chan Hing-Kai, Amy Chin; Prod.: Chan Hing-Kai, Amy Chin; Cast: Tony Leung Ka-Fai, Sandra Ng, Anthony Wong, Roy Cheung, Jason Chan, Samuel Pang. ★★★



### Once Upon a Time in China 2

This series with heroic martial arts master Wong Fei-Hong (Jet Li) keeps going strong! *Once Upon…2* brings absolutely incredible physical martial arts performances, the likes of which you have never seen on screen! The actors make it look so easy, but my God, how in the world can they physically perform like that? Director/writer Tsui Hark truly makes a strong point with his view on politics and religion, that's for sure! (Such as the scene where Master Wong kicks all the objects off the altar of the White Lotus Sect saying, "you can only rely on yourselves!"). Using some authentic historical figures, such as Sun Yat-Sen makes the movie a bit more spicy — adding more to the chaotic history of China in the 1890's. I felt the first scene on the beach with many practicing martial art students at the break of dawn really symbolized the hope of the director, considering the time when the film was made (1991), shortly after the Tiennamen Square incident! Great music also. Yes, China really needs more people like Master Wong! HK, 1992, 108 min., Dir./Prod.: Tsui Hark; Scr.: Tsui Hark, Chan Tin-Suen, Cheung Tan; Cast: Jet Li, Rosamund Kwan, David Chiang, Donnie Yen. ★★★☆

Montreal World Film Festival and Fantasia movies' rating by CJP

Kieryn Beesley-Bardell (Order #5003683)

# FANTASIA: EVEN MORE ASIAN MOVIES! (Continued)

## Swordsman 2

The combination of Tsui Hark with martial arts actor Jet Li offers viewers scene after scene of fantastic action! My head was spinning after watching this! A twisted take on the Ming Dynasty in China during the 16th century. I have no idea why Japanese ninja from Japan's civil wars end up in China to side with the mystic "Asia the invincible" — who is also a eunuch — and this "Asia" falls for Lin (Jet Li). Interesting costumes and a fantastic martial arts performance! Lin's mission is to look for the sacred scroll that contains "mysterious practices" and enable the bearer to become invincible like Asia. What they find out is quite a joke all right. Is "Asia the invincible"' symbolic of the craziness of politics? Also a good occasion to see beautiful actresses. A must see for Jet Li fans! HK, 1991, 110 min., Dir.: Ching Siu-Tung (*A Chinese Ghost Story*), Stanley Tong; Scr.: Hanson Chan, Tang Pik-Ying, Tsui Hark; Prod.: Tsui Hark; Cast: Jet Li, Brigitte Lin, Michelle Reis, Waise Lee, Rosamund Kwan. ★★★☆

## KOREAN MOVIES

### Barking Dogs Never Bite (*Flanders Eu Gae*)

What a delightful discovery! South Korea is truly producing excellent films in recent years, and all with young, talented moviemakers. Believe it or not, the director Bong Joon-Ho is a newcomer and this is his first feature film! His direction is brilliant and he, along with some other writers, wrote a script that satirizes modern Korean society — such as corruption, social injustice, and last but not least (hold your breath if you're a dog lover) a country where it is acceptable to consume canines (many nations in the world have dogs on their menus, such as Vietnam and Micronesia to name a few). This touching story takes place in a big city where apartments and living conditions are crammed. Main character Yoon-Ju is going bananas, listening to a dog's barking in the apartment complex — to the point where he'd literally kill the darn annoying mutt. It's then that he gets himself into really big trouble — but it's old security guard that loves eating dog meat! Actually, dogs have little to do with most of this film, but rather it's the emphasis on everyday life and people making the best of what they've got. If you're in the mood to watch a warm, comedic drama with jazzy contemporary music, this film won't disappoint! Nice cinematography, especially near the end. South Korea, 2000, 106 min., Dir.: Bong Joon-Ho; Scr.: Bong Joon-Ho, Tae-woong Derek-Son, Song Ji-ho; Prod.: Cha Sung-jai, UNO Films Prod.; Cast: Lee Sung-jae, Bae Doo-na. ★★★☆

### The Foul King (*Ban Chik Wang*)

If and when you are in the mood for a good laugh and to be entertained, *The Foul King* is perfect! (And you'll understand why this film was a smash hit in South Korea!) Main character Im Dae-Ho (played by Song Kang-Ho) is nothing new in the comedy field, but you really get involved emotionally with his personal growth (in this case it's pro-wrestling — although it's scripted as an entertainment show) from a bullied wimp to become "somebody". Young rising star director Kim Ji-Woon takes you to a world of laughter, at times to tears (how would you react to Dae-Ho showing up in his Ultra Tiger Mask to reveal his true feelings to a cute office lady?), with superb storytelling that keeps you glued to the screen! And if you're a wrestling fan, don't miss this hilarious film! South Korea, 1999, 122 min., Dir./Scr.: Kim Jee-woon (*The Quiet Family*); Prod.: Lee Mi-jeon; Cast: Song Kang-ho, Chang Jin-young, Park Sang-myun. www.foul.co.kr ★★★☆

## OTHER MOVIES

### $la$her$

On July 19th, 2001 *$la$her$*, along with director Maurice Devereaux and the actors, was given its world premiere at Fantasia in a full house theatre. Outwardly, it's a gory nonsense horror show, using high definition video to make the audience feel as if they're watching a TV game show. Director Devereaux came up with the idea of a depraved Japanese game show (yes indeed, in Japan there are some very depraved game shows that fight in the ratings to stay in business — reality shows Survivor invented nothing). In the very near future, $la$her$ has become the most popular TV show: you watch contestants up against homicidal killers (sounds like Roman gladiators) where they risk their lives for ambition, fame and... money. How bloody stupid and idiotic, you may say, and that's the point the director is trying to make about "reality" TV. This shock treatment with cynical laughs left me feeling very confused and uncomfortable, but it is still an interesting social satire of the public's growing sick tastes. Canada, 2001, 120 min., Dir./Scr./Prod.: Maurice Devereaux; Cast: Sarah Joslyn Crowder, Tony Curtis Blondell, Carolina Pla, Kieran Keller, Christopher Piggins, Neil Napier, Sofia DeMedeiros, Jerry Sprio, Claudine Shiraishi. ★★★

We've seen nearly a dozen other good Japanese or asian movies at Fantasia 2001, but unfortunately that's all the space (and time) we can dedicate to this subject for now. See you at Fantasia 2002!

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# CONVENTION REPORT: NAN DESU KAN & ANIME WEEKEND ATLANTA

Game designer Susumu Sakurai

Actor Scott McNeil

Actor Tristan MacAvery

Above: Animator Scott Frazier;
Below: Actor Taliesin Jaffe

It was a gesture rarely seen at anime conventions in the U.S.; A group of fans stood, facing an American flag as a woman sang the Star-Spangled Banner. That sort of ceremony once would have seemed more likely for a baseball game than a convention of fans intent on entertainment, but this was different. It was at Nan Desu Kan in Denver, Colorado, 11 days after four airliners had been hijacked. One airliner crashed in Pennsylvania, one struck the Pentagon, just outside of Washington, D.C., and two planes hit and destroyed the World Trade Center in New York.

The devastating, unprecedented disaster shocked the world and all but brought the United States to a halt. Nearly every sports and entertainment event on the weekend following the terrorist attacks was called off, including a comics convention outside Baltimore and a tarot event near Chicago. Emotions, rubbed raw by the televised sight of carnage, had recovered by the following weekend that anime fans were ready to enjoy themselves at two events — Nan Desu Kan and Anime Weekend Atlanta in Georgia.

A few days after the attacks, the mid-September conventions announced that they were planning to continue. “We have nothing to fear but fear itself. In that light, AWA will go on as scheduled. We will not be turned into cowards by cowards,” was the statement from the Georgia convention. And Nan Desu Kan said they would continue because of what their event stood for: “Freedom, for one, the ability to learn, to hear, be, do and see things that are new and wondrous; Safety, for another, a place we strive to make that is a good and safe place for young people to reach out and reach toward their potential; and Friendship, in a place where we believe that every individual who tries to build a bridge to another in this world makes a difference.”

But before the fun, there was time to reflect. At Nan Desu Kan, the opening ceremonies were turned into a memorial of remembrance for the victims of the attack. In keeping with the national movement that saw American flags blossoming from storefronts, homes and cars, a flag was placed on the main stage at the Colorado hotel used by the convention.

“We’re stubborn,” said Becca Norman, co-chair of Nan Desu Kan. “Anyone who tries to crush our spirit will have the opposite effect.,” she said on a weekend when just traveling to a convention was a sign of defiance against terrorism. “Every one of you serves as an emblem of love that burns brighter than any hate.”

Then Stephanie Morris, a volunteer on the Colorado convention’s staff, walked forward to sing the star-Spangled Banner, and the audience rose to its feet. Everyone had to hold back tears for the loss the nation had suffered.

Only following that gesture was it appropriate for the weekend’s enjoyment to begin, and even that was tempered by the number of people who were not able to attend. The travel restrictions following the attacks prevented some Kan Desu Kan guests from heading to Colorado, including Toshihiro Kawamoto, character designer and animation director for *Cowboy Bebop* and the *Vision of Escaflowne* Movie; Nov. Takahashi, head of Studio Hard, and actors Bob Bergen and Debbie Rabbai. And singer and composer Mari Iijima chose not to travel from her California home to attend Anime Weekend Atlanta.

However, the Colorado convention got another Japanese guest, game designer Susumu Sakurai, who has created *Gundam* games. “I send deepest sympathy and condolences for all affected by this incident,” he said about the attack victims.

Pictures by Kevin Lillard. For more information: www.fansview.com and www.awa-con.com & www.ndk.cc.

Kevin Lillard Bardell Order #5033683

# CONVENTION REPORT: NAN DESU KAN & ANIME WEEKEND ATLANTA (Cont.)

Sakurai hadn't known until a few days before Nan Desu Kan that he was going to be sent to the U.S. as a replacement for Takahashi. He packed some promotional materials and headed to Colorado, where he spoke about his design work (Sakurai said making a game means as much work as producing an animated film) and campaigned for American fans to support a Japanese bid for a future World Science Fiction Convention.

Also able to attend Nan Desu Kan were Keith Burgess of Manga Entertainment, animator Scott Frazier, artist Newton Ewell, a delegation from Panther Comics, author Cynthia Hands, and actors Taliesin Jaffe, Tristan MacAvery and Scott McNeil. Burgess gave fans a sneak peek at the opening of the English-dubbed version of the *Neon Genesis Evangelion* movie that his company planned to release, and McNeil, despite being from Vancouver, B.C., looked the part of the all-American cowboy.

Around 1,500 people were at Nan Desu Kan, but the convention had expected more to attend. Whether it was travel problems from the attacks, which caused many airline flights to be cancelled, or nervous feelings over traveling, no one was sure. But 1,200 miles to the southeast, more than 3,100 people went to Anime Weekend Atlanta. Some people speculated that the high attendance came because suburban Atlanta schools were not in session on the Friday of the convention weekend. More likely was that, after so many days of reeling from the emotional impact of the terror attacks, anime fans had a bad case of cabin fever and wanted to have a good time.

And joining the fans in Georgia was a remarkable collection of English-language voice actors. "I love making a fool of myself," joked Kira Vincent-Davis, a guitarist who plays Ruri Hoshino in *Martian Successor Nadesico*. "How else can you go from 12 years old to 26 and make yourself double D-cup and blond," added Hillary Haag, a computer sales representative who has played Nene Romonova in *Bubble Gum Crisis 2040*. These two actors made their first convention appearances at Anime Weekend Atlanta, and were joined by fellow actors Jason Douglas, Doug Smith, Corrine Orr, Brett Weaver, Tiffany Grant, Juliet Cesario, Scott Simpson, Peter Fernandez, Ken Meseroll, Tom Tweedy, Amy Howard Wilson and Jessica Calvello.

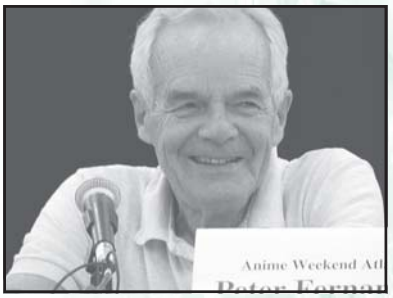
Simpson and Cesario spoke about how they'll be replaced as the voices of Keiichi and Belldandy in the *Oh My Goddess* series, now that Pioneer Entertainment has the rights to the series. "We hope that everyone shows the same openness to them," Simpson said about the new *Goddess* actors. "We were asked "Are we disappointed?" Yes, we were, but it's a standard part of the business. Anyway, more Belldandy is a great thing."

The most popular of the acting guests seemed to be the ones who showed up in costume. Tiffany Grant, fresh from re-voicing her Asuka role for the *Evangelion* movie dub, had a 1960's style *Star Trek* bridge uniform, and Calvello wore a Shiokaze outfit to promote her work in the *Virgin Fleet* series produced by Central Park Media.

But in the midst of the enjoyment, there still were memories of the disaster. Orr and Fernandez work in New York, and spoke about the Sept. 11 attack. Fernandez recalled seeing the smoke from the World Trade Center as he drove to work on the north side of Manhattan. Orr told about a friend who had worked in the south tower a few floors below the spot that was hit. And she mentioned the days after the attack, when subway stations were tightly guarded by police and "New York was silent and everyone was walking. Partly because the subway was closed, and partly because no one wanted to be alone in their homes," Orr said.

Actor Scott Simpson

Actor Juliet Cesario




Actor Peter Fernandez

Above: Actor Corrine Orr; Below: Actors Tiffany Grant (left) & Jessica Calvello

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# CONVENTION REPORT: NEKOCON

Artist Fred Perry

Artist Colleen Doran

Singer Mari Iijima

Above: Writer Sean Carolan
Below: Writer Jenifer Moore

The fourth NekoCon continued a tradition, extending back nearly a decade, of anime conventions in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. Returning to the same Holiday Inn where Katsucon began, the convention, held on the last weekend of October 2001, attracted a comfortably-sized crowd. But, like everything else in the U.S. in the autumn that followed the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the atmosphere was a little more subdued.

Mari Iijima, the singer and songwriter who portrayed Lynn Minmay in *Superdimensional Fortress Macross*, had an eloquent way of expressing the emotions of the day. "Minmay's singing stopped the space war. I don't think I can stop what's happened in the world, but I can share some peaceful times with you," Iijima said at NekoCon's opening ceremonies. Mentioned at the ceremonies were the volunteers from previous years of NekoCon who had been called to active military duty, and the friends that some anime fans had lost in the attack on the Pentagon.

Colleen Doran, the artist of *A Distant Soil*, had an unique perspective on the previous month's attacks. She comes from a law enforcement family, and recalled her parents' dinner-table talk about the chances for a major terrorist assault on the U.S. "I thought I'd never see something like that," Doran recalled during a panel discussion. "But my mom and dad said, "Yes, we did." They were not surprised." Fred Perry, who served with the U.S. Marine Corps in a general engineering support unit during Operation Desert Storm ten years earlier, noted that he was no longer on ready reserve status. Still, Perry said "I wish I could pass along some of the things I learned as a non-commissioned officer."

At NekoCon, Perry was looking back at his recently-completed, self-animated *Gold Digger* film, which he was planning to release on home video in the coming months. Perry, who decided to animate his characters after he couldn't find an animation studio to handle the job at a reasonable price, said he didn't expect the amount of work it would take to create his own film. He spent long hours drawing background and even more time perfecting details like getting characters to walk from one side of a frame to another.

Perry's use of computer animation mirrored the changes in the anime industry, according to animator Scott Frazier. He noted that the Toei animation studio planned to drop cel animation in favor of using computer programs, and most of the anime industry was making the same move. Making animated frames by computer saves the cost of purchasing cels and paint and lets artists create more cels in the same amount of time, saving money — and Frazier said those savings are needed to keep anime studios afloat in tough times.

Before her concert at the convention, Iijima had some candid comments about her career. A few weeks earlier, Iijima had released her second self-produced music album, "Right Now," and she was continuing to work on soundtracks for a couple of films. But, Iijima feels she hasn't reached her full potential yet since moving from Japan to the U.S. "I go to the rental store and rent J-pop and I wonder how this is popular," Iijima said. "I listen and think, "This sucks. How did it become No. 1." When I was in Japan, I listened to those musicians and thought that I could beat that. I've always felt underrated. I felt I would come here and compete with the real thing. I don't have any regrets, but I'm not happy where I am. I don't know what to do to make my career bloom."

Something that has bloomed in worldwide animation is the *Power Puff Girls*, which has grown from a Cartoon Network curiosity to a marketing force worth hundreds of millions of dollars. *Power Puff* collectibles can be found from discount stores to county fairs, and the series has spun off a DC comic book. Two writers for that book, Jenifer Moore and Sean Carolan, traveled from New Jersey to talk about how they think up movie title puns as comic titles ("Viva Las Vegas" became "Amoeba Las Vegas," and "Beau Geste" became "Bow Jest"). Some of the *PPG* comic stories are adaptations of the cartoon stories, but others — such as the ones written by Moore and Carolan — are original stories. "We're told that it's dialogue-light," said Carolan. "There's a lot of action and then Mojo Jojo comes along." The action on the page is a combination of the writers' ideas and the artwork of people such as Philip Moy (who has been known to appear at events such as Anime Expo). "We'd never written fight scenes before and we had to figure what to do. We'd write "Insert fight scene here." Sometimes he'd insert dialogue — their mouths would be open." And the stories from Moore and Carolan have been so popular that they've reversed the pattern of turning cartoons into comics; some of their *Power Puff* tales have been turned into animated shorts.

Pictures by Kevin Lillard. For more information: www.fansview.com and www.nekocon.org.

Kevin Lillard's Bardell Order #56033633

# THE MODERN JAPANESE MUSIC DATABASE (PART 14)

## FAQ 14: Where Do I Go From Here? Part 1

By this point, faithful readers should be wondering where to go for more information and products. If you were involved in the early anime community, trying to find J-pop discs can almost be a case of deja vu: rare and hard to get, just like anime a couple of decades ago. Fortunately, that has rapidly changed over the past few years.

The best place to go for information is the Internet. The king of the hill is Bonsai's search engine at http://jpop.hatch.co.jp/. It is well organized, making it easy to locate soloists or bands and contains links to most of their important sites, both English and Japanese. The next places to hit are the web rings. These are coalitions of web sites on the same subject, joined together by a directory, and can be navigated from one directly to another, insuring that you always have pages on the topic you want. Some of the better ones are "The Japanese Entertainers Ring" [www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?id=1ring=japanentindex], "The J-Rock Ring" [http://members.tripod.com/~jrockring/main.html], "The J Rock Express Ring" [www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=jrock;list], "The J Star Circle" [www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=jstarlist], and "The J Pop Ring" [www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=j-poplist]. Most J-pop sites have links to multiple rings, as well as their own selections of links they consider good.

Most big artists have English fan sites, but official sites, as well as the most informative fan sites, are in Japanese. Some Japanese sites have begun to offer an English version. English sites tend to be minimalist information and lots of pictures, but one advantage they have is not being censored by the Japanese governments, who clamp down on Internet music files [except on official artist and company sites], so you can usually find downloadable demos. Japanese sites make up for this by often being treasure troves of information. To access this material involves a few tricks. You need to get the Japanese text add-on for whichever browser you use, then a program that will translate the Japanese into English. I recommend *Translingo*, as it not only gives you English words, but also attempts to rearrange them into English grammar.

There's little in print. Most books on Japanese pop culture will have a bit, maybe a chapter, but the only two with major coverage are Schilling's *Encyclopedia Of Japanese Pop Culture*, which, once the music articles are rearranged in chronological order, gives a brief history of J-pop from the 50s to the 90s and McClure's *Nippon Pop: Japan's Pop Music*, which is the only complete book on the subject. McClure covers Japan for *Billboard* Magazine, so you can often find industry news, though little on the artists, in it's pages. They usually do a Japan special once a year and every issue contains the current top-10 album and single charts in the International Section. Some artists appear in Chinese entertainment magazines. The Japanese "Billboard" is *Oricon* at www.999.com/index-e.asp [English version & charts]. While on the net, you might want to check out some Japanese radio stations. This can be done via Microsoft's Internet Explorer 5's radio toolbar, which, if the function is downloaded from a Japanese site, comes preloaded with the stations.

One of the easiest print sources to get is via *Protoculture Addicts* back issues [available from www.protoculture.qc.ca/Catalog/Products.htm]. I've been writing on J-pop since 1993 and there's quite a bit! Choices, however, were restricted to material connected to anime or easily found in Western Chinatown stores. PA #21: pg 9, "Japan Rocks" [intro material, *Bubblegum Crisis* BGM, Princess, Chisato Moritaka, Miho Nakayama, Shizuka Kudo]; #26: 20,"How to Access New Sources of Anime & Music" [getting major chain and Chinese music stores to cough up J-pop; also in #X1: 36]; #27: 26, "Explaining Minmay: The Allure Of The Idol Singer" [the idol industry]; #29: 28, Shonen Knife; #30: 26-27, *Ranma* & *Dragon Ball* BGMs; #31: 23, *Totoro* BGM [also in #X1: 34]; #32: 24, Nokko [from Rebecca], Princess; #33: 32, Ryoko Tachikawa [Priss, voice in *Bubblegum Crash*], Lindberg; #34: 33, Mari Lijima [Minmay's voice in *Macross*], Yuiko Tsubokura [did songs on *Bubblegum Crisis* BGM]; #35: 30, Mari Hamada, Miho Nakayama; #38: 37, anime BGM roundup [*Oh My Goddess*, *Ranma*, *Macross 7*, *Fatal Fury*, and *Nadia*]; #39: 41, *Ranma* BGM; #47: 24, Chisato Moritaka, Pink Sapphire, Yoko Oginome; #48: 23, Chage & Aska, Yukie Nishimura; #50: 16, Show Ya, Princess [also in #44: 18]; #51: 25, Shizuka Kudo, Noriko Sakai; PAX #1 Special: 46, Miho Nakayama, X-Japan, Seiko Matsuda. For those not in at the beginning of the current series, we've done Tomomi Kahala (#57: 48), Globe (#58: 47), Tetsuya Komuro (#58: 46), trf (#59: 53), Namie Amuro (#60: 51), Max (#61: 53), Speed (#62: 51), Judy & Mary (#63: 51), Nanase Aikawa (#64: 44), Glay (#65: 45), X-Japan (#66: 49), and Seikima2 (#67: 53) as part of the basic lineup. I am planning to continue the series beyond this if there's reader support.

**Next Issue**: FAQ 15: Further Resources Part 2

## More Music in PA: An Index

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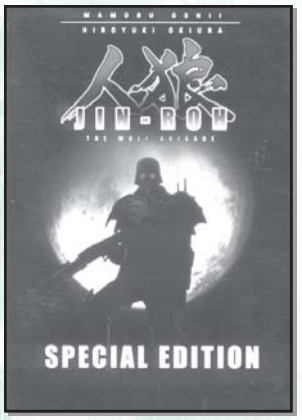
On MacIntosh, stations can be found with RealPlayer or iTune & we recommend www.japanaradio.com. Index compiled by CJP (A = Article, L = Lyrics, R = Review).

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)




## JIN-ROH SPECIAL EDITON (DVD) ★★★★☆

This movie, directed by Hiroyuki Okiura, is one of Production I.G.'s, *Ghost In The Shell* 's Mamoru Oshii's studio, flagship works. As such, there is not much action, but the profoundly philosophical and moral story (what happens to the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* if he starts to wonder why he ate her?), although complex and contemplative, is great if you are in the right mood. Even if *Jin-Roh* was directed by someone else, Oshii's influence is so strongly felt that you can be fooled into thinking this is one of Oshii's own movies! With such a mentor, Director Okiura has an interesting career in front of him! This "Special Edition" DVD set contains an instructive booklet (read it before you see the movie!) and 3 discs: The Movie, The Extras (which consist in interviews, trailers, production art gallery, etc.) and The Soundtrack. The packaging consists in a four-paneled box, which slips in a clear plastic sheath. If you liked the feel of *Ghost In The Shell* and *Patlabor 2* , you should definitely see *Jin-Roh* !

Bandai Entertainment/ Viz Video, Cat. #1882, Bilingual DVD, 102 min., $29.98, 16+.

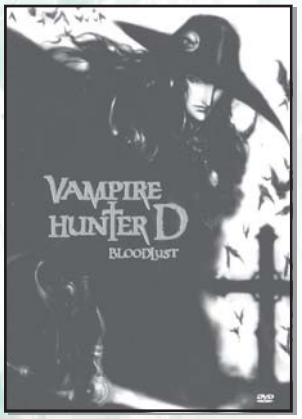
| Designs: | **4.5** | Animation: | **4.5** | Soundtrack: | **4** | Story: | **4.5** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | **4.5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

## STRANGE DAWN (DVD), VOL. 1 ★★★★

This one has been a very nice surprise! While we expected a kiddy show with no story and cuteness galore, what we got was cuteness with a VERY serious edge! Do not be fooled by the looks of the DVD's cover art. This is a well written story, a mix between *Aura Battler Dunbine* (for the two main characters' alienation to this brand new, yet disquieting world they find themselves captive of), Miyazaki's movies (especially *Nausicaa* ) and *El-Hazard* (for the story's premises); what can two normal-sized teenage schoolgirls do in a world where there aren't even bathrooms, beds, houses, etc., designed for them? Even worse, what can these poor girls do when the people of this strange world are at war and they consider them to be their legendary "Great Protectors"? There is even a well developed political side to the story. The designs are great, the animation more than excellent, the soundtrack very nice and the story surprisingly profound and complex. Strange Dawn was a REALLY COOL surprise! A must see!

Urban Vision, Cat. #UV1076, Bilingual DVD, 92 min., $29.95, PG (Violence, Mature Situations).

| Designs: | **4** | Animation: | **4** | Soundtrack: | **3.5** | Story: | **4** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | **4** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|




## VAMPIRE HUNTER D: BLOODLUST (DVD) ★★★★☆

At last! Yoshiaki Kawajiri's (1985 Vampire *Hunter D*, *Ninja Scroll*, *Wicked City* and many others...) newest masterpiece is available to us! Although we had already seen this movie at the Fantasia 2000 festival, we could not wait to see it again. The story (which has nothing to do with the first movie) might be slightly simplistic (this is a vampire movie, after all...), but the animation quality is quite simply fantastic, each frame being like a work of art. The designs, for both characters (by Yutaka Minowa) and mecha, are superb and the powerful gothic atmosphere Kawajiri was able to give a simple vampire movie is worthy of Tim Burton. This DVD contains interesting goodies (by the way, there are "D" and Layla Action Figures coming out this Summer), such as a "Behind The Scene" and a "Storyboard To Feature Comparison". Our only problem with this DVD is with the 5.1 sound, which is rather strangely mixed, to the point that it is sometimes hard to hear the dialogues without cranking the sound WAY up... This DVD MUST be part of your collection!

Urban Vision, Cat. #UV1093, Dubbed, 105 min., $29.95, PG (Graphic Violence, Mature Situations)

| Designs: | **5** | Animation: | **5** | Soundtrack: | **4.5** | Story: | **4** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | **4.5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

## VANDREAD (DVD), VOL. 1 ★★★★

Yet another great offering by Studio Gonzo, responsible for masterpieces such as *Blue Submarine #6* . Gonzo has been at the forefront of computer use in anime and their talent at it is, yet again, demonstrated in *Vandread*. All computer shots are neatly mixed with the standard digital animation and the result is very nice indeed. The story is a weird mix between *Macross* (without Minmei...) and *Tenchi Muyo!* : Hibiki Tokai, a man from the male-only planet Tarak, finds himself captured by his peoples' worst enemies: Women! Will Hibiki survive his encounter with the fairer (and not necessarily weaker...) sex? As for the mechanical and character designs, they are really cool and, although the character designer is a guy by the name of Kazuya Kuroda, it is hard for us to believe that Keiji Goto (*Nadesico* ) had nothing to do with them... The DVD disc contains only a few goodies, but two collectable cards are included in the packaging. *Vandread* is a really fun show with lots of humor (and lots of babes...) and you should definitely see it!

Pioneer, Cat. #11651, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+ (Violence, Mature Situations).

| Designs: | **4** | Animation: | **4** | Soundtrack: | **3.5** | Story: | **4** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | **4** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Ratings' Legend: 0 = Pathetic / 1 = Poor / 2 = Fair / 2.5 = Average / 3 = Good / 3.5 = Very Good / 4 = Excellent / 5 = Outstanding

Kevyn Doshy-Bardell (Order #56033683)

## ADVENTURES OF THE MINI-GODDESS (DVD), VOL. 1

"The Gan-chan Files". If you have always thought *Oh! My Goddess* to be too cute for you, wait until you see this! Now Belldandy, Urd and Skuld are in SD and inadvertently (for Belldandy, at least...) torment a poor rat, named Gan-chan. This is hilarious, mostly because Gan-chan is being abused in the funniest ways possible (the moment when he discovers that his ideal wife is a kitchen kettle is a classic). Since each episode is very short (less than 10 minutes each), there are twelve of them on this DVD (which also contains an Art Gallery. Really funny and cute!

Pioneer, Cat. #11639, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

## CERES, CELESTIAL LEGEND (DVD), VOL. 4-5

Although as good as *Fushigi Yugi* , *Ceres* also has all of its older brethren's quirks namely: a slightly repetitive story (Toya goes to find Aya, then goes back to the Mikage, then goes back to Aya, etc.) and characters that sometimes act in such an illogical manner as to become annoying. However, *Ceres* is a lot darker than *Fushigi Yugi* and the seriousness and maturity of its characters' feelings (which are, quite often, rather passionately expressed), as well as its nicely done animation and character designs make these quirks quite bearable. As with the first three, these two volumes have interesting goodies: Creditless Opening and Ending, Line Art Files, etc. If you liked *Fushigi Yugi* , you should try *Ceres* ...

Pioneer/ Viz Video, Cat. #DAC04/5, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea., $29.95 ea., PG (Violence, Nudity, Mature Situations, Harsh Language).

Designs: **4** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3.5** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

## HAND MAID MAY (DVD), VOL. 3

This DVD contains the last three episodes of the series, plus what seems to have been a special episode. The end of the story is pretty predictable, but still, this was fun to watch. The digital animation is really well done (lots of bright colors in there!), the character designs are really cute (and strangely sexy at the same time) and the whole thing does not take itself seriously at all. The "special" episode reunites all the characters for one last chaotic day. The DVD does not contain much as far as goodies are concerned, but it is probably not why people will buy this DVD. Have fun!

Pioneer, Cat. #11592, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+ (Mature Situations, Brief Nudity).

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

## M.S. GUNDAM 0083 (DVD), VOL. 1

Of all the *Mobile Suit Gundam* animations ever made, *Gundam 0083: Stardust Memory* is our favorite. May it be for the story, designs (both mechanical and characters) or music, this *Gundam* is hard to beat. With names like Toshihiro Kawamoto (*Cowboy Bebop* ), Shoji Kawamori (*Macross* ), Hirotoshi Sano (*Tekkaman Blade* ) and Hajime Katoki (*V-Gundam* , *Gundam Wing* TV series and OVA, *Gundam Sentinel* ) taking part in its creation and direction , it is no wonder *0083* is the best *Gundam* you can find. This first DVD contains the first four episodes of this 13 part series. If you can afford only one *Gundam* series for your collection, *0083* is the one to have! See our (very complete) Feature Article in PA # 51.

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #0365, Bilingual DVD, 100 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **4** Story: **5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4.5**

## AKIRA SPECIAL EDITION (DVD)

Although Pioneer recently released their re-mastered version Akira, a lot of people were waiting for their boxed "Special Edition", which was to contain a second disc with a lot of extras. Trust us, the rumor was true! The digitally re-mastered (both pictures and sound) movie is superb, but the second disc is really extraordinary. The bonus material it contains is truly astounding: the complete Akira Production Report (the same one that was released years ago), the Akira Sound Clip (a very instructive documentary on the Geinoh Yamashiro Gumi which sheds light on the incredibly complex process of composing the *Akira* soundtrack), an interview with Katsuhiro Otomo, the original Japanese trailers, interviews with the restoration staff on the process of restoration, more than 4,500 stills of production material, etc., etc. If you can find this Special Edition, buy it!

Pioneer, Cat. #11568, Bilingual DVD, 124 min., $34.98, 17+ (Graphic Violence).

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **4.5** Soundtrack: **5** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4.5**

## HAKKENDEN, THE (DVD BOX SET)

Before there was the *Rurouni Kenshin* OVA, there was *The Hakkenden* ! The animated version of an old legend recounting the story of eight mighty warriors coming together to avenge their clan has been, for a long time, considered the ultimate Samurai animation. The basic story is interesting enough, but lacks focus (the second part of the series is worse in this aspect than the first) and the two very different styles of animation used cut the series in half in a very abrupt way, especially since the second style used is certainly not as nice as the first. However, if you like your anime with a Kurosawa-like scope, the *Hakkenden* DVD Box Set is definitely for you...

Pioneer, Cat. #11486, Bilingual DVD, 420 min., $54.98, 16+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

## M.S. GUNDAM 0080: WAR IN THE POCKET (DVD), VOL. 1

This is the third in our "Gundam Holy Trinity", *0083* and *Char's Counterattack* being the other two. While *0083* and *CCA* main features are trigger-happy, loose-cannon mecha action, *0080* is all story. If you put all six episodes together, you have about 15 minutes of mecha action in there (but that 15 minutes is rather intense...)! However, the story of a little boy discovering the horrors of war is so gripping that you do not really care about the low quantity of mecha action. This DVD contains the first three episodes of the series and features goodies like a Japanese TV Ad Collection, textless opening and ending animations, etc. If you like your mecha anime with a good, solid story, *Gundam 0080* is a good choice...

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #0385, Bilingual DVD, 90 min., $29.98, 13+ (Animated Violence, Strong Language).

Designs: **4.5** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **4.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

## NIE-A UNDER 7 (DVD), VOL. 3-4

These DVDs contain the last six episodes of this beautifully done, but somewhat extremely depressing story. Done by the creators of *Serial Experiment Lain*, the series introduces you into the life of Mayuko, a dirt-poor student who tries to make her miserable, ordinary life a little better, only to have many of her attempts be foiled by NieA, an alien girl who lives in her closet and eats her food. There are a lot of hilarious moments in there, but the general atmosphere is rather depressing. At first, *NieA Under 7* looks like another *Furi Kuri* , but, on second viewing, it looks more like a peek into a kind of life you do not want any part of. Funny on the first level, but you'll want to hang yourself if you dig for the second...

Pioneer, Cat. #11594/5, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea., $29.98 ea., 13+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **4**

Unless stated otherwise, all reviews are by Martin Ouellette.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

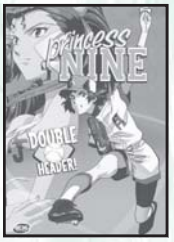
## AH! MY GODDESS! THE MOVIE (DVD)

This is a movie a lot of people had been waiting to see. The animation and designs are superb and the whole atmosphere has that spun candy feel that has always been part of *Ah! My Goddess* . However, the story is not up to par with the rest of the production. While screening this movie, we felt like we were watching yet another *Tenchi Muyo!* flick and this feeling of déjà-vu gets quite annoying after a while. The DVD contains two interesting goodies: an Art Gallery and the first episode of *The Adventures Of Mini-Goddess*, an extra-cute SD parody. The package also contains a very nice plastic pencil board, sure to become a collectable. If you like *Ah! My Goddess* , this DVD is a good buy for you, but do not expect an edge-of-your-seat story...

Pioneer, Cat. #11638, Bilingual DVD, 106 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **3.5** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

## PRINCESS NINE (DVD), VOL. 1-2



Since we never had the chance to see *Ace O Nerae* (*Aim For The Ace* , a classic of the shojo/ sport genre, Tennis in this case), we were waiting for the chance of seeing something similar. Although nothing terribly original, *Princess Nine* is quite entertaining when you let yourself be drawn into the story. The animation is nothing spectacular, even if some of the Baseball scenes are quite well done, but it does the job. These two discs contain the first nine episodes of the series and DVD #2 has a VERY interesting extras: How To Cook Oden and boy, does that look delicious! By the way, the Japanese seem to take their Baseball WAY too seriously...

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DPN-001/2, Bilingual DVD, DPN-001: 125 min./ DPN-002: 100 min., $19.98 ea., 12+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **2.5** Story: **3.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

## SABER MARIONETTE J AGAIN (DVD)

"Plasmatic Crisis." This is the six-part OVA that follows the *Saber Marionette J* TV series. Peace has come back to Japoness and Otaru and the Marionettes, as a favor granted to Faust, now live with the Saber Dolls. However, a new Marionette, named Marine, makes her apparition and, although kind and friendly, she puts her new friends' lives at risk. Since this is an OVA series, the animation is better than the *SMJ* TV series, but not much else has changed. This DVD contains all six episodes of the OVA, plus goodies such as a Spanish Audio Track, a Commercials Collection, an Art Gallery, etc. A very good buy!

Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #0575, Trilingual DVD (Eng., Jap., Span.), 170 min., $29.98, 13+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

## SOUL TAKER (DVD), VOL. 1

*The Soul Taker* is one of Tatsunoko Pro's (who did unknown little shows such as *Gatchaman* and *Macross* !) most recent offerings. As with many Tatsunoko shows, this one has to do with a dark Superhero-like character who has to fight a mysterious organization. However, *The Souls Taker* takes the "Dark Superhero" gig a little further, as the show has an indisputable *Spawn* feel, especially the animation. The result is a somewhat disturbing show that looks more like a comic from Image or an MTV video clip than anything else. Moreover, this is VERY violent and is DEFINITELY not for kids. However, if you like weird stories and on the edge, artistic animation, *The Soul Taker* is something you should look into...

Pioneer, Cat. #11698, Bilingual DVD, 75 min., $24.98, 16+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **4** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

## POWERSTONE (DVD), VOL. 1-2

Yet another series inspired by a video game from CAPCOM (*Street Fighter* ). However, this one seems to be more kiddy-oriented than *SF*. The series, as a whole, is pretty standard kid fare, with lots of action and colors and a very simple story, somewhat reminiscent of *Dragon Ball*. Since the DVD is only dubbed, we presume this particular release to be targeted at a North American audience, probably for television. *Power Stone* is nothing special, but if you like *Indiana Jones* / *Dragon Ball* -style stuff with lots of Ninjas and bizarre bad guys, you should try it...

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DPS-001/2, Dubbed, 100 min. ea., $19.98, 12+.

Designs: **3** Animation: **2.5** Soundtrack: **2.5** Story: **2.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **2.5**

## ROBOTECH (DVD), VOL. 7-12

This is something a lot of people had been waiting for: a complete DVD release of *Robotech* . Although old (1985) and primitive by today's standards, *Robotech* is the series that got many of us into anime. The Box Set #4 contains the first 12 episodes of *Southern Cross* and the fourth "Extras" disc, which is full of fun stuff like all the original series' (*Macross* , *Southern Cross* and *Mospeada* ) opening titles and end credits, animation model sheets (for *Southern Cross* ), etc. Volumes 11 and 12 contain the first 13 episodes of the New Generation (*Mospeada* ) part of the series. OK, so the dubbing and acting is not exactly first class and the story has some inconsistencies, but this is a classic and nobody can take that away from Carl Macek...

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DRT/BX4 (Box Set #4)/ DRT/10/11/12, Dubbed, 315 min. (Box Set #4)/ 150 min. ea. (Vol. 10 &12)/ 175 min. (Vol. 11), $44.98 (Box Set #4)/ $14.98 ea. (Vol. 10-12), G.

Designs: **4** Animation: **2.5** Soundtrack: **2.5** Story: **3.5** Translation: **3** Average: **3**

## SHERLOCK HOUND: CASE FILE 1 (DVD)

This is one of the weirdest DVDs we have ever had the chance of reviewing. Why? Because there is material on BOTH sides of the disc! The reason for this unusual format is simple: each English episode is one minute longer than the Japanese version! However, this minute does not make much difference. If you have never seen this series, be aware that Hayao Miyazaki (*Mononoke Hime* , *Nausicaa* ) is one of the Directors who worked on this series and, trust us, it shows in the series' overall quality. This is a classic you can watch with the kids...

Pioneer, Cat. #11720, Bilingual DVD (Dual Side), 125 min. (on each side), $29.98, 7+.

Designs: **3.5** Animation: **3.5** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **3.5** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

## THOSE WHO HUNT ELVES (DVD), VOL. 1

Three unlikely individuals have been brought by mistake to a world of magic and fantasy. However, the people of the place do not want them there and will try anything to send them back. But the idiot Elf priestess who is to do the job screws up and sends the spell far away, where it inscribes itself on the skin of beautiful female Elves! Now our three losers are to search the land for the missing pieces, stripping all cute Elves in the process! If you want berserk and chaotic, this is the series for you! The DVD goodies consist in a track dubbed in Spanish, character sketches and clean credit animation. Hilariously funny (especially Junpei, the brain dead muscleman).

A.D. Vision, Cat. #DTW-001, Trilingual DVD (Jap., Engl., Span.), 150 min., $29.98, 12+.

Designs: **4** Animation: **3** Soundtrack: **3** Story: **4** Translation: **3.5** Average: **3.5**

Ratings' Legend: 0 = Pathetic / 1 = Poor / 2 = Fair / 2.5 = Average / 3 = Good / 3.5 = Very Good / 4 = Excellent / 5 = Outstanding

Kieryn Dooley Bardell (Order #56035683)

## ARC THE LAD (DVD), VOL. 4-6

These three DVDs contain the last 15 episodes of the series. Although nothing special story-wise, *Arc The Lad* manages to keep a pretty good level of visual quality: the animation is fluid and crisp, the colors bright and the designs not bad. However, much like *Sorcerer Hunters* and *Orphen* , it suffers from the fact that all of this has been done before. But if you like action and think that heroes don't necessarily have to look the part (Elk certainly does not...), then you should try *Arc The Lad*... A.D. Vision, Cat. #DAR-004/5/6, Bilingual DVD, 125 min. ea., $29.98 ea., 15+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **3.5** | Animation: | **3.5** | Soundtrack: | **3** |
| Story: | **3** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## BOOGIEPOP PHANTOM (DVD), VOL. 3-4

These two DVDs contain the last six episodes of this rather sinister and depressing series. Somewhat similar to *Lain* in its general atmosphere, it is, however, much darker and manages to actually frighten the viewer, in much the same way the *Ring* movie managed to do so. If you are depressed and have a self-worth problem, this is not a series for you! Although not a series that will become a timeless classic, its overall quality makes it a work worthy of notice... The Right Stuf, Cat. #RSDVD2023/24, Bilingual DVD, 85 min. ea., 15+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **4** | Animation: | **3.5** | Soundtrack: | **3** |
| Story: | **3.5** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## CREST OF THE STARS (DVD), VOL. 3-4

This DVD contains the last three episodes of this wonderful, but little known TV series. Although not action-oriented, the story is gripping until the very end. The designs and animation are also superb and the soundtrack excellent (the opening is slightly reminiscent of something like *Babylon 5* ). As for extras, this DVD only contains a Crest Of The Stars History. If you like your sci-fi anime with a realistic twist, *Crest Of The Stars* is a good choice... Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #0683, Bilingual DVD, 75 min., $29.98, 13+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **4** | Animation: | **4** | Soundtrack: | **3.5** |
| Story: | **4** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★★ |

## GASARAKI (DVD), VOL. 5-6

This series was rather disappointing, as its ending is nearly incomprehensible, even in English! Who and what Yushiro and Miharu really are is not clear at all and all the mumbo-jumbo/ philosophical explanations explains absolutely nothing. However, the overall quality is still there (especially for the designs). Each of the DVDs is full of interesting extras, such as interviews, Glossaries, Production Sheets (with excellent explanatory notes), etc. If only the story could have been up to par with the rest of the production, this series would have been a masterpiece... A.D. Vision, Cat. #DVDGK-005/6/7/8, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea., $29.98 ea., 12+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **4.5** | Animation: | **3.5** | Soundtrack: | **3.5** |
| Story: | **3** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## BLACK MAGIC M-66 (DVD)

Of all the animations based on Masamune Shirow's manga (*Appleseed*, *Ghost In The Shell* ), the 1987 *Black Magic M-66* is the one that visually respects it the most. A DVD release of this classic (directed by *Blood*'s Hiroyuki Kitakubo) is a good thing, even if it does not bring it anything more than a clearer picture (the colors are still pretty dark). Nice to have in your collection of old stuff... Manga Entertainment, Bilingual DVD, 48 min., $24.95, PG (Graphic Violence, Brief Nudity, Strong Language)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **3.5** | Animation: | **3** | Soundtrack: | **2.5** |
| Story: | **3** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★ |

## CARD CAPTOR SAKURA (DVD), VOL. 4, 6-7

Finally Vol. 4: Sakura Fight! (Eps 13-16) and Vol. 6: Friends & Family (Eps 21-24) & Vol. 7: Magical Mystery (Eps 25-28). For those who want to see the original Japanese uncut version, including exclusive episodes not seen on TV! Recommanded for fans. A cute & fun series. See also PA# 65: 49; 66: 55 & #69: 60. [CJP]

Pioneer, Cat. #10565, 10566/67, Subtitled, 100 min. ea., $29.98 ea., 13+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **3.5** | Animation: | **3.5** | Soundtrack: | **3.5** |
| Story: | **3.5** | Translation: | **4** | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## DIRTY PAIR ORIGINAL (DVD), VOL. 2

This volume contains five episodes of the original *Dirty Pair* TV series. Haruka Takachiho's devastating bombshell duo (which were first seen in the original *Crusher Joe* movie. Funny how *CJ* quickly disappeared, while *DP* stays alive after all these years) has seen a lot of different incarnations during the years (including Adam Warren's, one of the best in our opinion...), but the original series, by *Macross* ' Studio Nue, is still cute and funny. The number of anime (and live actions) it inspired are countless and its influence can still be felt today. This is one of the true 1980's classics... A.D. Vision, Cat. #DOD-002, Bilingual DVD, 125 min., $29.98, 15+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **3.5** | Animation: | **3** | Soundtrack: | **3** |
| Story: | **3** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★ |

## GATEKEEPERS (DVD), VOL. 2-3

These two DVDs contain episodes 8 through 20 of this rather funny (even if there are hints of things getting more serious...) and very interesting little series by Gonzo (*Blue Submarine #6*). The adventures of the Gatekeepers continue amidst their *Thunderbird /Captain Scarlet* -inspired universe! Keiji Goto's (*Nadesico*) character designs are really nice, the animation is of high quality and the story is very entertaining. Each DVD has interesting extras, such as Special Endings, Line Art files, etc. What more do you want? Pioneer, Cat. #11614/ 11620, Bilingual DVD, 80 min. ea., $29.98 ea., 13+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **4.5** | Animation: | **4** | Soundtrack: | **3.5** |
| Story: | **4** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★★ |

## BLUE SEED (DVD), VOL. 3-4

These two DVDs contain the last twelve episodes of the *Blue Seed* TV series, one of the works of Yuzo Takada, best known for *3X3 Eyes* and *Super Catgirl Nuku Nuku* . Although we never thought this series to be a masterpiece of anime, we have always liked the way it ends. Each of the discs contains a cool Extra: Omake Theaters, very short, but quite hilarious, animation found at the end of the episodes. *Blue Seed* is a nice little series that does not take itself too seriously and makes for good entertainment... A.D. Vision, Cat. #DBS-003/4, Trilingual DVD, 145 min. ea., $29.98, 12+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **3.5** | Animation: | **3** | Soundtrack: | **2.5** |
| Story: | **3.5** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## CARDCAPTORS (DVD), VOL. 6-7

Vol. 6: The Best Of Friends (16: Allies, 17: Meilin's Story, 18: The last Card I) and Vol. 7: End Of Days (19: The Last Card II, 20: The Final Judgement, 21: One Fateful Day). For those who want to see Sakura as it was shown on TV. See also PA#66: 57 & #69: 60. [CJP]

Pioneer, Cat. #11469/70, Dubbed, Edited, 75 min. ea., $24.98, 7+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **3.5** | Animation: | **3.5** | Soundtrack: | **2.5** |
| Story: | **3** | Translation: | **2** | Average: | ★★★ |

## EL HAZARD: THE WANDERERS (DVD), VOL. 2-3

These two DVDs contain episodes 8 to 20 of the *El-Hazard* TV series. Although not as good (in our personal opinion...) as the original OVA, this TV series offers us an alternate version (Ifurita is a charming bubble head, the Princess is Makoto's sweetheart, etc.) of the same story. Since the series was done for TV, the designs are not as wild as in the OVA, but the animation quality is not bad at all. If you liked the original OVA, you will very probably like the TV series... Pioneer, Cat. #11635/36, Bilingual DVD, 11635: 150 min./ 11636: 175 min., $29.98 ea., 13+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **3.5** | Animation: | **3.5** | Soundtrack: | **3** |
| Story: | **3** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## GETTER ROBO (DVD), VOL. 2-4

The original title of this OVA series was *Shin Getter Robo.* Much of Go Nagai's material was created by him alone, but *GR* is about the only one he created with someone else, namely Ken Ishikawa. Not surprisingly, the inspiration for *Shin Getter Robo* comes from Ishikawa's manga, *Getter Robo Go.* In short, if you are a Go Nagai fan AND like Heroic Giant Robot stuff, this series is for you! Each DVD has goodies, such as a Behind The Scenes, an Original LD Insert file, etc. This series takes itself so seriously and is so over the top, its just great! A.D. Vision, Cat. #DGR-002/3/4, Bilingual DVD, 75 min. ea. (DGR-003: 100 min.), $29.98 ea., 15+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | **3.5** | Animation: | **3** | Soundtrack: | **2.5** |
| Story: | **3** | Translation: | **3.5** | Average: | ★★★☆ |

Unless stated otherwise, all reviews are by Martin Ouellette.

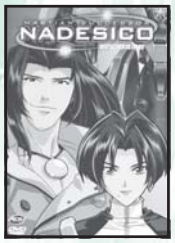
Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

## I'M GONNA BE AN ANGEL (VHS), VOL. 2

We have rarely seen something this weird. Volume one was wild and volume 2 continues the tradition. Noelle really wants to be an Angel and she has now set her sights on Natsumi. However, amidst all the cuteness, a dark impression is starting to emerge, something telling you that events will take a dramatic turn near the end. As with the first volume, the overall quality is superb for a TV series. Even if Nobuteru Yuki is only supposed to have worked on the ending credits animation, we think that, animation-wise, he had a lot to do with this series... Synch-Point, Cat. #SPTN-D002, Dubbed, 75 min., $19.95, PG (Brief Nudity, Mature Situations).

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 4 | Animation: | 4 | Soundtrack: | 3 |
| Story: | 3.5 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## MARTIAN SUCCESSOR NADESICO (DVD), VOL. 6



This DVD contains the last five episodes of *Nadesico* , one of the most interesting mecha series of the 1990's. To end the war, Yurika takes the only decision that seems sane: nobody can have the ruins of Mars, may it be Nergal or the Jovians. For that, the Nadesico's crew and their cute Captain are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, but the past and the future may come to their help... A really cool series with lots of surprises! A.D. Vision, Cat.#DND-006, Bilingual DVD, 125 min., $29.98, 12+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 4.5 | Animation: | 3.5 | Soundtrack: | 3.5 |
| Story: | 4 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★★ |

## ORPHEN (DVD), VOL. 2-3

Orphen and friends continue their search for Bloody August/ Azalie, while Volcan and his (much smarter) cohort Dortin try to make as much trouble as they can. The third volume is especially interesting, since we learn who was Azalie, how she became Bloody August and why Orphen left the magicians' Academy. The story is going somewhere and some details in Azalie's story could make for an interesting ending. Like on the first DVD, the goodies consist in Clean Opening and Closing animations and a Production Sketches file. A nice series... A.D. Vision, Cat. #DOP-002/3, Bilingual DVD, 75 min., $29.98, 12+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 4 | Animation: | 3.5 | Soundtrack: | 3 |
| Story: | 3.5 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## SAILOR MOON HEART COLL. (DVD), #6 / SS #1

Those are two DVDs of crucial importance: one offers the end of *Sailor Moon S* and the other brings the beginning of *Sailor Moon Super S*! It is always cool to watch *Sailor Moon* in its original, uncut version (although Usagi still sounds dumb). The bad guys first went after people life energy, then their pure heart and now they're looking for beautiful dreams! A cute and fun show for all! See also PA# 65: 51; 66: 56; 68: 58; 69: 60. [CJP]

Pioneer, Cat. #11479/11652, Bilingual, Uncut, 165/145 min. ea. (7 & 6 eps!), $29.98 ea., 13+.

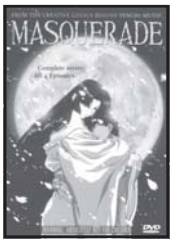
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 3 | Animation: | 3.5 | Soundtrack: | 3 |
| Story: | 3.5 | Translation: | 4 | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## M.S. GUNDAM (DVD), VOL. 6-7

The Pegasus and its crew continue their war against the Zeon and meet the enemy's best ace team, the Black Tri-star. Thanks to their deadly Dom MS, the Tri-Star put Amuro in a very bad position. After that, Char and his cohorts attack the main Federation base of Jaburo and it is up to the Pegasus' young crew to save the day. *MS Gundam* may be an old series, but the qualities that have made *Gundam* so popular for nearly 25 years are still apparent. A truly huge classic... Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #1775/76 (DVD)/ #1765/66 (VHS), Dubbed, 100 min. ea., $14.98 (VHS)/ $24.98 (DVD), 13+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 4 | Animation: | 3 | Soundtrack: | 3 |
| Story: | 4 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★★ |

## MASQUERADE (DVD)



How would you feel if every time you approached a woman, you would become so excited, you would become dangerous to them? This is what happens to Gen every time and it is starting to get to him! *Masquerade* was created by the same guy who gave us *Tenchi Muyo!* and it shows in its production quality. If you have only one hentai title, *Masquerade* should be the one, if only because of its visual qualities... Anime18, Cat. #A18D-2078, Bilingual DVD, 120 min., $29.99, 18+ (Graphic Nudity, Graphic Sexual Situations).

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 3.5 | Animation: | 3.5 | Soundtrack: | 2.5 |
| Story: | 3 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★☆ |

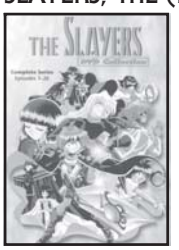
## POKEMON: JOHTO JOURNEYS (DVD), VOL. 9-12

Pikuchu's adventure continues with *Pokemon* Vol. 47-50 (*Johto* #9-12). Like all long series, it's rather repetitive, but it is a nice and cute show for kids, with lots of cool values. Of course, adults could feel dizzy or nauseous if they watch too many episodes! For kids only. See also PA# 65: 52. [CJP]

Viz/Pioneer, Cat. #11596/97, 11646/57, Dubbed, 70 min. ea., $24.98 ea., G.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 3 | Animation: | 3 | Soundtrack: | 2 |
| Story: | 3.5 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★ |

## SLAYERS, THE (DVD COLLECTION)



This DVD Box Set contains the entire first *Slayers* TV series (the best and funniest, in our opinion). As with many DVD Box Sets, Disc A contains the standard goodies: Meet The Cast, Actors' Bios, sneak peeks at the graphic novels, etc., while Disc D contains a DVD-ROM feature (for PC only): an Art Gallery, Character Gallery, Scripts, Character Lineart, etc. A good buy...

Software Sculptors, Cat. #SSDVD-6136, Bilingual DVD, 600 min., $129.99, 3+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 3.5 | Animation: | 3 | Soundtrack: | 4 |
| Story: | 3.5 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## M.S. GUNDAM 08 MS TEAM (DVD), VOL. 4

This DVD is the last one of the series. Although all the episodes of the series are captivating, episode #10, with Shiro's Ez-8 versus Norris Packard's Gouf Custom, is brain numbing in its sheer intensity. The last episode, titled "Last Resort", is not as good as we thought it would be, even if it is somewhat fitting for the story... A really cool and gritty *Gundam* story for those who thought *Gundam Wing* too polished and elegant. See Main Feature in PA #59. Bandai Entertainment, Cat. #1713, Bilingual DVD, 90 min., $24.98, PG (Violence, Brief Nudity, Mature Situations).

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 4.5 | Animation: | 4 | Soundtrack: | 4 |
| Story: | 4 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★★ |

## NADIA (DVD), VOL. 3-6

It seems that ADV will be able to realize the impossible: a complete release of *Nadia* ! The series has been a fan favorite for the longest time and is one of Gainax's greatest achievement. these four DVDs go to episode #24, so about half of the series has been released so far. If you can afford it, you should get this series in its entirety, if only because it is one of the immortal anime classics of the 20th century... A.D. Vision, Cat. #DNS-003/4/5/6, Bilingual DVD, 100 min. ea., $29.98, 12+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 4.5 | Animation: | 3.5 | Soundtrack: | 4 |
| Story: | 4 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★★ |

## RANMA 1/2 RANDOM RHAPSODY (DVD), VOL. 4-6

Yet more craziness from Ranma and friends. Each volume focuses on a particular theme (#4 on kidnapping, #5 on winter and #6 on the occult), which makes it easy for the fan to choose a DVD to his liking. However, there are only three episodes on each DVD, even if there are no Extras on any of them. At $29.98, there should be at least four episodes, don't you think? But *Ranma 1/2* sells whatever happens, so... Viz Video, Cat. #DRRR04/05/06, Bilingual DVD, 78 min., $29.98, 13+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 3.5 | Animation: | 2.5 | Soundtrack: | 3 |
| Story: | 3.5 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★☆ |

## SORCERER HUNTERS (DVD), VOL. 3-4

These two DVDs contain the last twelve episodes of this rather ordinary Fantasy series. If *Slayers* had not made its apparition before, maybe *Sorcerer Hunters* would have had the chance to leave a more lasting mark in anime history, but it just was not to be so (even if the intro songs did manage to become quite popular with anime crowd). The interesting extras on these DVDs only consist in a Characters Biography file, but since each disc contains six episodes, you do get your money's worth of anime... A.D. Vision, Cat. #DSH-003/4, Bilingual DVD, 150 min. ea., $29.98, 15+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designs: | 3 | Animation: | 3 | Soundtrack: | 3 |
| Story: | 2.5 | Translation: | 3.5 | Average: | ★★★ |

Ratings' Legend: 0 = Pathetic / 1 = Poor / 2 = Fair / 2.5 = Average / 3 = Good / 3.5 = Very Good / 4 = Excellent / 5 = Outstanding

Kevyn Beesley Bardell (Order #56033683)

# Ah! MY GODDESS THE MOVIE

"You have been selected to receive a wish," the goddess said.

"I wish that a pretty girl just like you would stay with me forever! "

And so went the first encounter between everyman Keiichi and the goddess Belldandy. The original manga *Aa! Megami-sama*, created by Kousuke Fujishima, has been the most popular title in the *Monthly Afternoon* anthology by Kadokawa since it began in 1988. And owing to its legion of fans, an *OA* series was released in 93 and became a mega-hit. Eventually, such a property had to be set free as a full-length feature film in 2000, realized by Hiroaki Aida and Hidenori Matsubara.

The story returns three years after the OAV. It's April and Keiichi and the motorcycle club are busy preparing to invite new members. Many guys gather in front of Belldandy but Tamiya and Otaki spoil the good mood. Sure enough, they get 4 new people including the mysterious Morgan. After the newcomers, invitation party, Keiichi and Belldandy go out for a stroll. A strange figure emerges and as soon as Belldandy sees it, she runs up to what appears to be a man. The man, Celesti, kisses her unexpectedly, saying, "Please come home." Keiichi is stunned, like that poor old man in the *Bamboo Princess* legend. Belldandy collapses.

Meanwhile, a computer virus invades Yggdrasil, the host computer system in heaven. It is a malicious virus transmitted by an infected Belldandy. Soon Belldandy wakes up but she is no longer her old self; to be exact, she has lost her memories of Keiichi. Carefully considering Belldandy's condition and the fact she is not well enough to be a racing partner, Keiichi decides to skip the next race. After announcing his decision, Morgan tells him, "I will be her replacement."

However, Keiichi has an accident on his way home — his body escapes unscathed but his car is totaled. In the meantime Belldandy looks over a photo album with pictures of her and Keiichi. She realizes that if this were true she wants to know Keiichi better. Belldandy is determined to enter the race, hoping to get her memory back. One day, she has a flash and recalls that it was Celesti who took her memories away. Soon things come to a head and a climatic battle ensues. Will Belldandy get her memory back? And what have those two sisters, Urd and Skuld been up to lately?

Do you know the legend called *Ama no Hagoromo* (Cloth of the Goddess)? It has various versions, but I will discuss the one written by Suruga Fudoki. Hakuryo, a fisherman, by chance found the most beautiful cloth he has ever seen. It was the cloth of a goddess. Hakuryo stole the cloth on impulse. When the goddess realized she was missing it, she panicked because she can't return to heaven without it. To cut a long story short, she eventually decided to marry the fisherman. Afterward, they had a boy, but he found the goddess' cloth by chance. As soon as she got her cloth back she returned to heaven, leaving behind her family. But Hakuryo, who loved the goddess so much, wailed as he chased her, becoming a star.

When I first saw *Oh My Goddess,* I remembered this story. I did some research and discovered that Nekomi Institute is said to be located in Shizuoka prefecture, just like *Ama no Hagoro*. Coincidence? I think not! Belldandy, Skuld and Urd are named after the three fates of Norse mythology. Because of this story, many otaku are interested in Scandinavian legends. In Japan, there are many anime based on mythology but it's innovative to make heaven run by a super computer. As Japan is not a Christian country, such a concept isn't considered blasphemous.

Kosuke Fujishima is also the author of *You're Under Arrest*. Both are very different, but I love them both. The very popular Kikuko Inoue, the voice of Belldandy, made her break with this series; she also played Kasumi in *Ranma 1/2* and is the voice of Cameron Diaz in the Japanese dub of *The Mask*. Can you imagine Diaz as Belldandy? Masami Kikuchi (Keiichi) was originally a singer, but now he does wimpy guys like the titular character in *Tenchi Muyo*. He also played the dumb Hananwa in *Chibi-Maruko-chan*, a more mainstream anime in Japan. Aya Hisakwa (Skuld) is as nearly omnipresent as Megumi Hayashibara and played Sailor Mercury and *Card Captor*'s Kero. And Ayako Kawasumi (Morgan) played Melfina in *Outlaw Star*.

I hope the open-minded readers of *Protoculture Addicts* will enjoy this movie. Compared to the OAV the scale is bigger though, as usual, Keiichi is still the same everyman at the end — not superman. He is a realistic hero and gives the audience a good impression. In Japan, his "type" is popular with girls, like any guy a victim of the Tenchi Syndrome you can call him Mr. Congeniality.

Fans of *Oh My Goddess!* are sure to love this film, because it was created with them in mind. However, non-fans looking for something more substantial than boy-meets-goddess-boy-loses-goddess may prefer to pass, though it is still entertaining... compared to the *Pokemon* movies.

| Designs: | **4.5** | Animation: | **4** | Soundtrack: | **3** | Story: | **3** | Translation: | **—** | Average: | **3.5** |
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***Ah! My Goddess*** © Kosuke Fijushima / Kodansha. ©2000 *Ah! My Goddess* Partnership. Package design ©2001 Pioneer Entertainment (USA) Inc. Japanese video provided by Vince Wilson.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# ANGELIC LAYER: OVERVIEW

CLAMP has been Japan's manga and anime hit maker for quite some time and here now we're in the 21st century; after a silence since the end of Card Captor Sakura, Clamp has introduced Angelic Layer. Yes, it's an anime about a battle game but in a very unique style. Well, the story (based on the manga published through Monthly Shonen Ace Magazine) has a cute little heroine named Misaki Suzuhara, a junior high school student. It's not clear in which era people live but technology is quite advanced. Through the battle called Angelic Layer where gamers use 'Dolls', the story tells of Misaki's spiritual growth and the people around her who care for her very much. She's not a typical heroine at all because she's portrayed as an ordinary girl. When I first watched this anime I thought, "Oh it's just gamers manipulating dolls with computers. A sci-fi style game anime?" That was my first impression. Then co-incidentally I was watching CNN as I saw a group of gamers using a robot dog Aibo to play a ball game. It seems we've arrived and we're already living in an era where we can play games with robots.

Angelic Layer isn't that far from reality then. An ordinary girl when she enters junior high comes to Tokyo to live with her aunt. Her father has passed away and she doesn't live with her mother. Basically, she's happy-go-lucky, honest and sincere, a genuine good girl - she doesn't like disputes. When someone confronts her with an argument she quickly backs down to avoid any bad feelings. That's just the way she is. One day, she sees the game Angelic Layer and she's overwhelmed with the beauty of the white angel, which literally charms her to the game. A mysterious man with a white uniform, Icchan shows up and tells her that Angelic Layer is a game of dolls, which are called Angels and are created by the players themselves. Inside the arena these dolls are moved by the will of the gamers to fight. Misaki right away buys an Angel Doll and names her Hikaru ('the light').

This is a story in the great tradition of Pokemon about Misaki's growth and friendship among-players — even her rivals! But that's not all really, though some fans will enjoy the duels. Misaki's ordinary life and her close relationships play a pivotal role in this story. The big question that hangs overhead regards Misaki's mother. She has passed on the responsibility of raising her child to her grandparents. Why? Why doesn't she show up and meet Misaki, her own daughter? And what does Misaki think of her mother? As Misaki starts winning at the Angelic Layer competition, the drama between mother and daughter comes to the fore.

Other characters are colourful in fact! Misaki meets Kotaro Kobayashi and it seems that he really fell for her though she's oblivious to this so far. On the other hand, at the area, Oujirou the pretty bishonen boy starts talking to her and approaches her positively. Meanwhile, Misaki meets Tamayo chan and becomes a best friend at school; Tamayo is always there to cheer her up. You may wonder who is Misaki's rival. The character Hatoko Kobayashi, Kotaro's younger sister, doesn't quite live up to the rival title, but she's the strongest gamer in the Kanto area. Believe it or not Hatoko is a 5-year-old kindergarten kid, but a genius!

This show offers the drama of school life, family relations, friendship and love - aside from the gamer battle scenes, of course. Loving characters, experiences with whom help her grow, surrounds Misaki. Why? Because Misaki is untiring in her efforts and everyone falls for her earnest attitude. Through games, lots of people arrive to play their roles. Also, most of the gamers are girls (no surprise considering Angelic Layer is sponsored by the Piffle Princess store). So, you go girl! And have lots of fun!

| Designs: | **3** | Animation: | **3.5** | Soundtrack: | **3** | Story: | **3.5** | Translation: | — | Average: | **3** |
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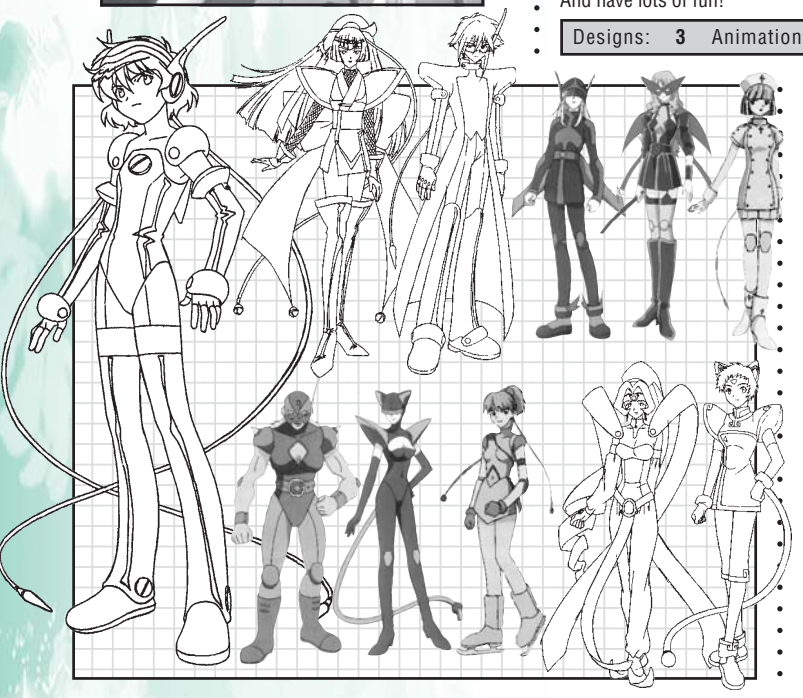


## ANGEL DOLLS

**Hikaru**: Misaki's Angel Doll is very small and light with speed. Hikaru's body looks sharp with a simply designed red coloured suit of a material light enough for the doll to move easily. Hikaru created her hairdo and it's very short. Misaki really loves this doll – and it shows.

**Suzuka**: Hatoko's Angel Doll wears a costume resembling a Japanese female ninja, with long black hair. Suzuka shows no unguarded moment and she always is on the alert. Impeccably dressed, Suzuka's strongest weapon is her speed.

**Wizard**: Oujirou's Angel Doll is very mysterious just like his master. The opponent's normally lose before Wizard touches them thoroughly. His true power is hidden under the mask and mantle. He clearly shows magic exists even in the scientific world.

**Valkyrie**: Don't think of this female warrior doll as feminine. Male dolls, beware!

**Queen**: As the name suggests, it acts like a queen with a noble attitude. Too arrogant for fans.

**Nightingale**: Looks like a cute little nurse with its little nurse costume, but it's only a nurse in look and name only; she doesn't bother to treat wounded Angels.

**Crossas**: As Asuka Kitamura is a pro-wrestler, her Angel Doll shows off a body rippling with muscles.

**Shadow Panther**: This Doll acts like a panther.

**Catherine (Katarina)**: Just like her Russian skater's namesake, this Angel's weapon is its light movement, wearing a pair of skating shoes just like a figure skater. Katarina's gamer, Ms. Korikawa, wants to be a skater herself. This Angel has enormous speed.

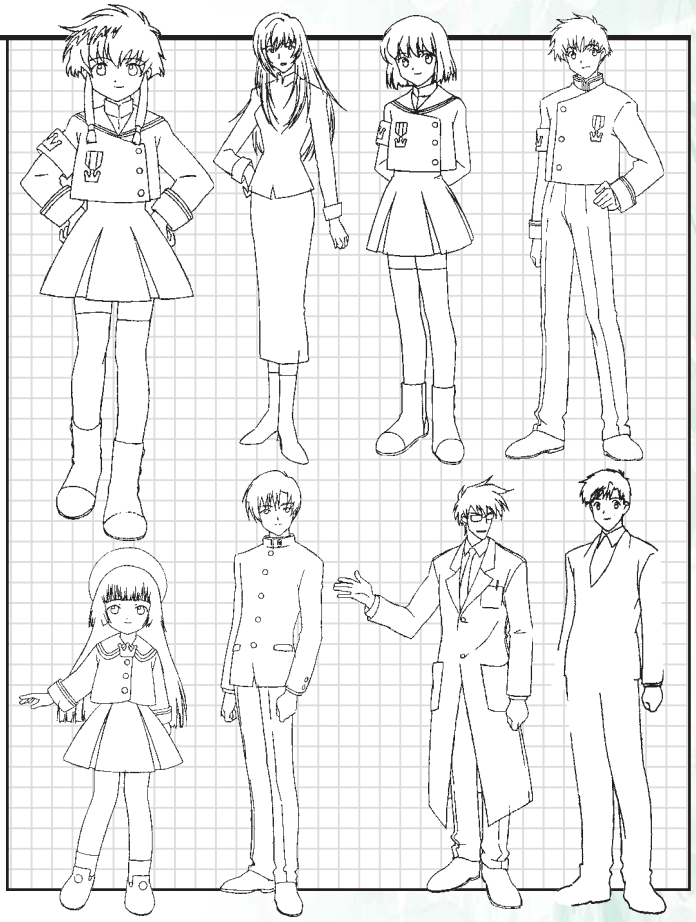
**Ranga**: This dancer Angel dances to the tune of death. She kicks opponents with her strong moves. The doll's skin is very dark and exotic, resembling a belly dancer. Rinko the idol singer is the gamer who controls her.

**Mao**: Mao (cat in chinese) looks like a cat with two big ears. Kung fu moves are this Angel's weapon.

***Angelic Layer*** © Clamp • *Angelic Layer* production Committee • TV Tokyo. Video provided by Keith and Asaka Dawe. For more info: www.angel-l.com; www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/angelic-layer/.

Kenyn Destiny Bardell (Order #56033683)

# ANGELIC LAYER: CHARACTERS



**Misaki Suzuhara**: This 13-year-old junior high school student from Wakayama Prefecture comes to Tokyo to attend school. Her grandparents raised her. Her father is dead and the mother lives in Tokyo though she doesn't come to see her. Basically a very cheerful girl with an earnest attitude towards life (some might say "boke"). She falls in love with the white angel while watching the Angelic Layer game and decides to buy one of her own. She develops greatly through battles at the arena.

**Shoko Asami**: Misaki's aunt (her mother's younger sister), Shoko is letting Misaki live with her in Tokyo. She's a newscaster at the local TV station.

**Tamayo Kizaki**: Misaki's best friend at school; she is always around to cheer her up.

**Kotaro Kobayashi**: An honest boy who is in love with Misaki. Misaki is blissfully unaware of his feelings. He is exercising karate at a dojo.

**Hatoko Kobayashi**: A 5-year-old kindergarten student, but a genius and extremely mature despite her years. The younger sister of Kotaro, she is the strongest gamer in the Kanto District. She always tries her best and always wins; she's called "The Goddess of All Winners." Although Hatoko is a junior, she is like a mentor to Misaki.

**Oujirou**: The bishonen (pretty boy) gamer is called "The Prince of Angelic Layer" because of his good looks. Especially since most players are girls, he's the centre of attention and affection. He looks calm on the outside, but can't forgive anyone that cheat — and despises unfair practise.

**Icchan**: He's a mysterious character. A bit like a father figure to Misaki, he keeps a photo of her with him.

**Mr. Ogata**: Icchan's company subordinate. He's always forced by Icchan to do outrageous things. He's really a poor fellow!

# ANGELIC LAYER: SYNOPSES

## 1. Nice to meet you! My only angel!

Misaki arrives in Tokyo to attend school while living with her aunt. She's not used to the big city and it overwhelms her. One day on the train station's mega-TV screen, she sees the Angelic Layer battle game between two Angels. One is black; the other white. She instantly falls in love with the white Angel and decides to have one of her own.

## 2. Do your best Hikaru! The first battle

Misaki goes to the Angelic Layer goods store, the Piffle Princess, and later she ends up fighting with the Angel Doll, Shadow Panther.

## 3. Who are you? Misaki's exciting lesson

The first game at the Angelic Layer arena with Shadow Panther was a big success for Misaki. But after winning, the mysterious Icchan shows up and tells her that she was only lucky — it was a fluke. Icchan advises Misaki to start practising if she wants to keep winning. Misaki tries her best to master the dancing technique.

## 4. The day when an angel falls.

Now Misaki decides to join the Tokyo Angelic Layer game competition. Her first opponent is the Angel Katarina, which is manipulated by the gamer Ms. Korigawa. Misaki does not know how to react!

## 5. I don't want to lose! I believe in Hikaru...

The second battle at the arena is with the giant sized power fighter Vasquez. Misaki does not want to hurt her Angel, Hikaru, and loses the chance to attack her opponent. Meanwhile, a little girl, Hatoko Kobayashi, the younger sister of Kotaro, is looking on in a serious manner.

## 6. The lightspeed Suzuka! Katoko's declaration as rival!

Misaki keeps on winning so now her opponent is Suzuka, the Angel Doll of Hatoko. Although she's only a junior, Hatoko seems to predict Misaki's reactions. Misaki is defeated easily and for the first time, the bitter taste convinces her to move on, but she feels vexed.

## 7. The lowest possible battle! Miaki's last chance

The final battle at the Tokyo competition arrives. Misaki's really worried ever since Hatoko's Angel, Suzuka, defeated Hikaru easily. In the next game, Maria is really showing strength and Misaki is at the lowest possible level, emotionally. Maria starts burning of an angry fire.

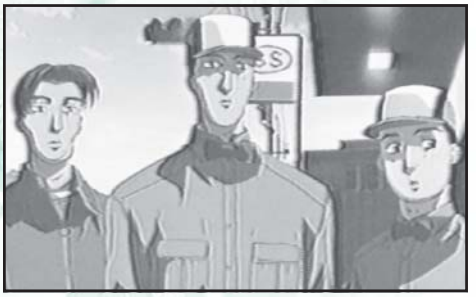
## 8. Misaki vs. Misaki? The dangerous classmate

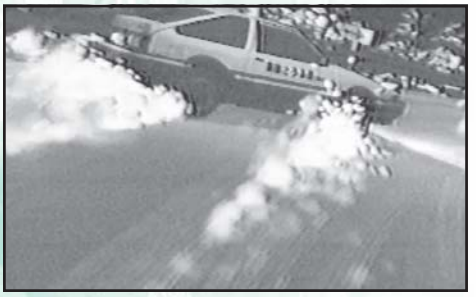
There is a classmate, Ryo Misaki, who stares at Misaki in nasty manner due to his inane jealousy. Ryo naturally challenges her, but since he's a boy, she hesitates. Meanwhile, Rinko comes to give her some advice.

*Angelic Layer* aired on TV Tokyo every Sunday at 17:20 from 4/1 to 9/23/2001 for a total of 26 episodes.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# INITIAL D: THIRD STAGE (THE MOVIE)





As we have already introduced this TV show in a previous issue (PA#68: 66-67) we'd like to add that *Initial D* also became a movie. The manga had become a big hit, selling more than 25 million copies in Japan; and despite the late hour time slot when the anime was shown, the ratings were around 24% (that means about 1 in four Japanese were watching this series). Therefore, Kodansha (through the Toho Movie Company) understandably came up with this theatrical release in January of last year to satisfy fans with a craving for more high-octane action. In a way, it's an ongoing story and if a viewer hasn't seen seasons 1 and 2 of the anime, the movie may be a bit confusing. But of course there are many enthusiastic *Initial D* fans who will savour the main characters' graduation and entrance to the independent world of adulthood. Perhaps they will find it bittersweet.

In this movie, genius driver Takumi Fujiwara really shines! He discovers himself, waking up from long frustrations and an attitude burdened by vaguity. Takumi's father kind of forced him to drive since his junior high days and despite his excellent driving abilities, he wasn't sure of himself and lacked goals in life. But in this movie, he gradually starts to show his own will and self-determination.

As for the racing scenes enhanced by computer graphics, viewers will feel dizzy, I bet. Especially on the large screen, it has major punch! These pulsing scenes will appeal to auto fanatics and the power and force of the vehicles are incredible to watch, especially when the cars turn corners at the highest point of the mountain road. The movie features two major battles for Takumi — with the leaders of Tochigi Prefecture's group "Emperor" and with the son of Takumi's father's past rival named Kai Kogashiwa. Especially with Kai at Iroha Slope, Takumi's driving technique really shines, getting better and better. He surely has a pack of slope driving sense. Watch this show with common sense — and never imitate these drivers, kids! I may say this till I'm blue in the face because so many people don't pay any heed to the dangers of this practice. In Canada, for example, drag racing is a growing concern, which has resulted in serious injuries and death. I watch the local news and see the tragic results and smashed cars on TV.

To make this movie more colourful, Takumi's love interest, a schoolmate named Natsuki, tries to make her moves on him. Despite Takumi's skills in driving, he is inept when it comes to girls because of his shyness. In the TV series, it was Natsuki who finally approached Takumi and asked him out. They go out a bit, go to the beach and once in a car she kisses him. Quite the pushy gal, eh? But Natsuki has a secret that she's hiding from him. She was a practicing Enjo Kosai — that is, girls who go out with older men who pay for their companionship. Natsuki was going out with a man who drives a Mercedes Benz and is generous with the cash. She even went along with a boy whom Takumi loathes (this will backfire later on for her). Takumi finds out and he quits associating with her. Natsuki of course feel terrible because she began feeling true love for Takumi. She broke off the relationship with the older man and started working at a hamburger joint, just as Takumi works at a gas station. Her words are a message to today's young Japanese girls who practice Enjo Kosai: "Earning money is very hard! But earning my own money gives me self-esteem. I've never felt so good for myself." After saving Natsuki from danger well, do they then begin dating steady again? Not quite. They do realize they are in love with each other and Natsuki even asks him to go attend university in Tokyo, but he declines.

After many races Takumi asks Ryosuke Takahashi to race. His head now clear, he says, "Now I know what I want in life. And all I have to do is follow him [Ryosuke]!" He decides to join the Takashi Brothers' new group — with Ryosuke as master. Like Ryosuke's brother, Keisuke, Takumi decides his future is to become a professional driver (in the meantime he works at a transporting company). How refreshing this anime is! And we'd love to see the another installment. Satisfaction guaranteed.

| Designs: | **3** | Animation: | **4** | Soundtrack: | **4** | Story: | **3.5** | Translation: | **—** | Average: | **3.5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

***Initial D* The Movie** © Hideaki Shigeno / Kodansha • ToMax • OB Planning. Video provided by Vincent Wilson.

Kenyn Bosley Bardell (Order #56033683)

# INITIAL D: EXTRA STAGE (OVA)

As this title suggests, Initial D Extra Stage is literally an additional story that excludes the main character Takumi Fujiwara. This OAV, which is divided in two mini-stories, focuses on two girls: Mako Satoh and her driving companion Sayuki. Together they have the nickname "Impact Blue" and are driving a Nissan 180-Sil Eighty. The first episode is "Impact Blue no Kanata ni" (Far in the Distance of Impact Blue). This time, Mako and Sayuki are challenged by a guy from Tochigi Prefecture's group "The Emperor". Mako at first isn't keen on driving because she's still depressed after an unfortunate incident with Mr. Iketani, where she approached him and offered up her virginity. Iketani never showed up at the agreed place and she waited for three hours. But when the boys from the Emperor Group look down on Mako and Sayuki because they are women drivers (apparently a universal belief), Mako is furious! Of course, Mako shows them what she can do!

In the second episode, "Sentimental White," the girls go skiing together — in fact it's an arranged date that Sayuki made with her childhood friend. There are no racing scenes in this episode, and it's a romance of Mako. She goes out with a handsome and decent man for a while. But then again most men she goes out witht want her to quit driving as a street racer. The new boyfriend also says it's dangerous and he'd worry. Well, I guess that's it for that romance! As pretty as she is, her passion is racing. To me, this episode is a reflection of today's Japan. A girl wants the choice to live her life as she sees fit. Many men today, feeling that someone should stay home and look after their children, are less keen on supporting a situation where both parents are working outside the home. Mako chose car racing and if she cannot drive, she'd be very unhappy. Some women put their occupation first (and don't necessarily have to have children) and they are happy. Let's hope Mako will find someone who understands her passion in life.

# INITIAL D: CHARACTERS

**Takumi Fujiwara**: 18 year-old high school student whose driving skill is at a professional level. He's the son of Bunta who used to be a professional driver and now owns a Tofu shop in Akina, Gunma Prefecture. Takumi has a dull face with very little interest in fast cars and fast girls... but as the story progresses his life totally changes and his passion to become a professional driver is awakened.

**Bunta Fujiwara**: 43 year-old retired car racer who now manages his Tofu shop. He helps Takumi in his own way making him a skillful driver, giving him advice when he needs it.

**Itsuki Takeuchi**: 18 year-old good friend of Takumi. His presence in this show is purely for comic relief — in other words, he's a clown.

**Natsuki Mogi**: 18 year-old high school student who becomes Takumi's galpal. But since her junior days she went out with jerks and accompanies an older man, whom Natsuki affectionately refers to as Papa, to acquire pocket money. Takumi finds out and fumes. Natsuki really wants to kiss and make up with him, so she breaks off her relations with the old man in the Mercedes Benz and works at the burger shop to learn the value of hard labour. She's really in love with Takumi.

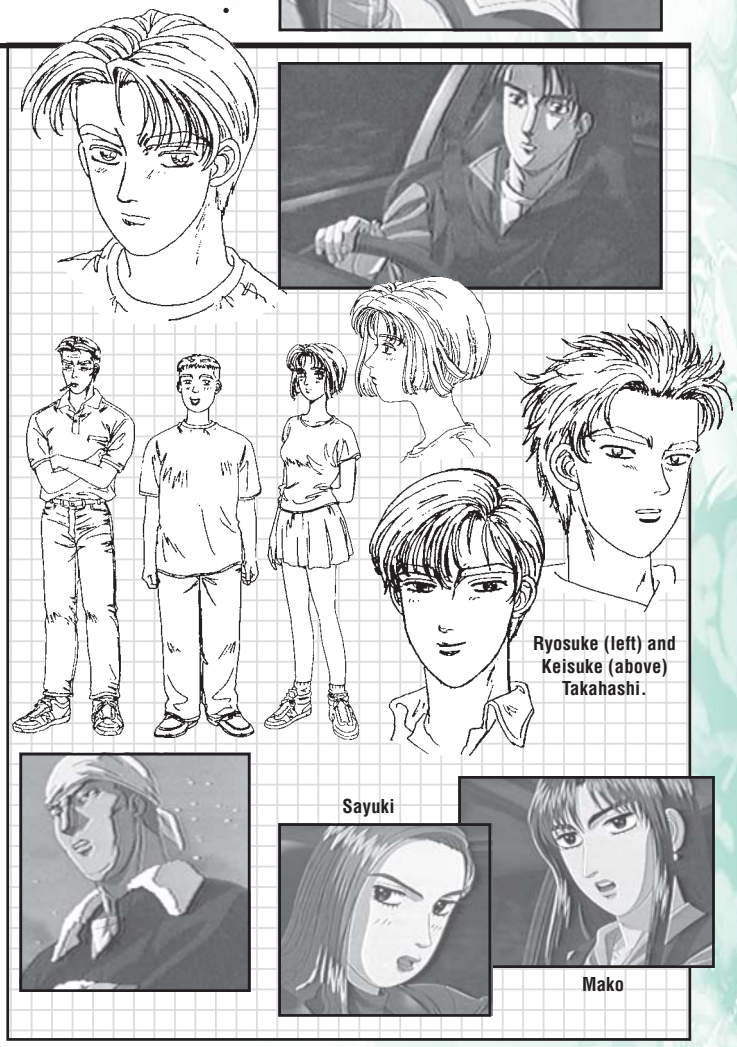
**Ryosuke Takahashi**: 23 year-old and extremely skilled. He uses his computer to analyze the races, cars, everything with his intelligence. Takumi beats him at one point, but treats him like a guru saying, "All I have to do is follow him." A very charismatic man.

**Keisuke Takahashi**: The younger brother of Ryosuke is also an excellent driver. The brothers want to create a new team and they try to recruit Takumi.

**Kyoichi Sudoh**: The leader of the driving team "The Emperor" from Tochigi prefecture. He is very calm, but drives with cold calculation.

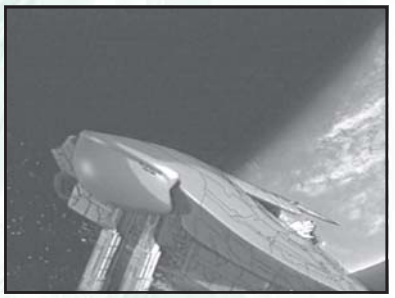
**Mako Satoh**: A lovely gal driver who is also of professional skill. She's really impressed by Takumi's driving abilities. In this show, her love interests are very disappointing. As a driver, she worships the ground upon where Ryosuke Takashi walks, and this led to the break up with Mr. Iketani. Can she ever find a decent boyfriend?

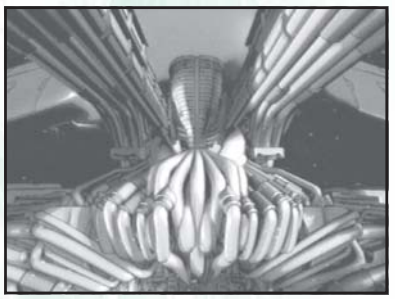
**Sayuki**: Mako's driving companion. She has a very, very strong attitude and big, luscious boobs!

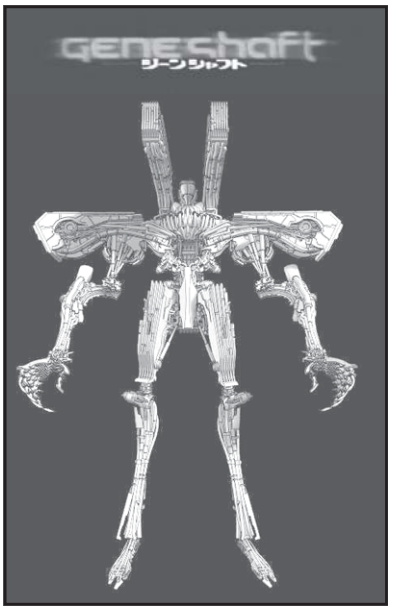



Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# GENE SHAFT: OVERVIEW








For those of you who are fans of *Escaflowne* The Movie, *Gene Shaft* is director Kazuki Sekine's latest offering, a space opera chock full of hard sci-fi. He also wrote the script himself, a story that takes place in a world dominated by DNA. It takes place in the 23rd century and since the 21st century, humans have learned to manipulate DNA to create clones easily. But something strange happened. In order to maintain peace on Earth, the government decided to adjust the population ratio: 90% females, 10% men. All humans are "born" in tubes, created with certain genes to predetermine their function in society. Meanwhile humans have found alien ruins on a satellite of Jupiter, Ganymede, and at the same time a giant ring appeared over the Earth. For a while, this ring showed no signs of harm. The Earth's government nonetheless decided to investigate to uncover its origins. Then terrorists attacked the ring, which shot back an enormous beam towards the Earth and many people died as a result.

One of the main characters is Mika Seido, who's a trained pilot for the military. She was assigned to join a unit called "Code Name S," but due to the attack, she had to be evacuated to the mysterious ship Bilkis and its giant space shaft. In fact, it is a robot not yet completed. There she meets Hiroto Amagiwa, whom Mika despises! She believes her best friend died because of his actions during the previous mission, but now Hiroto is the captain of the Bilkis.

As the story progresses through this world typically filled with female characters and battles with alien invaders (I suppose that is what anime sci-fi is all about these days) the show questions the true existence of the human race. Even today, in the early 21st century, cloning animals became possible — not just Dolly the sheep, but all kinds of animals already. So this story doesn't have to take place in the distant future. Do you think the human race will engineer superior humans in the future? In *Gene Shaft*, all humans are created in tubes controlled and chosen by government officials; once they reach 45 they are eliminated (a la *Logan's Run*) and thus there are no elderly (save for a few top officials) in order to make room for the young. According to Director Sekine, he was inspired by the work of a female sci-fi writer who used a man's name as her nom du plume, the late James Tiptree Jr., and wrote a story about women unknown to men (male writers in those days thought they understood women — how wrong they were!).

In Sekine's story many female characters appear, but there are no love relationships except the devotion of Mir Lotus towards the nasty Lord Sneak. Why? Because the director wants to know what kind of world without pair bonding and desire amongst men and women would be like. Can humans maintain eternal peace and prosperity without feelings of love and desire? Can these feelings actually impede human evolution? In one episode, ancient humans of the 20th century show up before Mika and her fellow crewmembers. Humans of the 23rd century think their ancestors are stupid and primitive — but are they really? Also the terrorists want to bring back the natural tendencies of the human race, instead of being manufactured in labs.

Sekine presents the theme of absolute madness in this future world without love. Is this world, under absolute dictatorship of the government, ideal? The way our real world is going, this story can really hit you. Could we be really heading towards a police state where our own DNA controls us? Mika, despite her genetic programming, seems to have real feelings.

The biggest twist of this story is that ancient aliens created DNA and spread it all over the universe; however, they decided that the human race has too many imperfections and must be eliminated. Despite cute character designs, the milieu is quite harsh. With hard rock music by Akira Takasaki, Sekine proffers you the madness of the 23rd century. Very high quality anime for fans who just can't get enough sci-fi in their diet.

| Designs: **3** | Animation: **3.5** | Soundtrack: **3.5** | Story: **3.5** | Translation: **—** | Average: **3.5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

***Gene Shaft*** © 2001 Satellite Studio • Shaft Project • Bandai Visual • Dentsu. Video provided by Michael Liu. For more info: www.geneshaft.com.

Kieryn Beesley-Bardell (Order #56035683)

# GENE SHAFT: CHARACTERS

**Mika Seido**: 16 years old and White gene type. She's a Shaft driver candidate and has a cheerful disposition, but she gets emotional quickly. She has a big complex due to her own gene type, "White," and forbids anyone to mention it. She's extremely nervous when the subject of death comes up, because her best friend has been killed. She believes Hiroto caused the death and thus hates him for it. The only time she can relax is when she talks to her pet dog, Bismarck (created by Mika's scientist mother). They miss each other and so Mika sends e-mail to her pet during her space missions.

**Hiroto Amagiwa**: 16 years old and Garnet gene type. He is the captain of the first-class battleship Bilkis. He's trained to be a captain with his specialized DNA and was raised as an elite. He has a strong character, making proper decisions quickly and efficiently — but he looks merciless. His pride is very high and he prefers to be a loner. He used to be more open, but his difficult mission is making him grow harsher and harsher.

**Mir Lotus**: 17 years old and Royal Blue gene type. She's a Shaft driver candidate. She was created with the best DNA possible; endowed with beauty, smarts and athletic prowess. Therefore, she feels superior and looks down on others. Her attitude is quite arrogant. She can't get along with Mika and is always quarrelling with her.

**Sergei IV Sneak**: 25 years old and Black gene type. A member of the Immortal (that's a group of the ultra-elite), Sergei is a colonel. He was raised much like Hiroto and Mir. He looks handsome and gentle, but he's a nasty and sneaky (hence his name perhaps?) bastard inside, deceiving everyone. He believes that humans are trash and have to be wiped out. A total selfish and worthless person himself, he is right about one thing — the trash should be taken out. That is, him.

**Beatrice Ratio**: 16 years old and Baby Blue gene type. An operator and a registrar from the military, Beatrice has DNA that is programmed to restrain any feeling so she can concentrate on her work; therefore, she may look cold. She's always at Hiroto's side, supporting him even though she knows he's in the wrong.

**Sofia Galgalim**: 20 years old and Peony Purple gene type. She's a Shaft driver candidate. Very tall, like a model, with superior athletics, she's like a big sister to Mika who is always there for her. She also has common sense.

**Mario Musikanova**: 18 years old and Golden-Orange gene type. A vice-captain of the spaceship Bilkis. Very smart without showing it, he is a decent and likeable fellow.

**Tiki Musikanova**: 12 years old and Marigold gene type. She's a Shaft driver candidate and a very mouthy girl. She adores her brother Mario who shares the same DNA.

**Remmy Levi Strauss**: 15 years old and Jasper Green gene type. A Shaft driver candidate, she looks like she is Mir's retainer but it's a disguise. She's a revolutionary terrorist.

**Dolce Saito**: 10 years old and Vermilion gene type. A genius computer programmer with a talking dummy.

# GENE SHAFT: SYNOPSES

## 1. Those Who Inherit The Planet

Mika Seido is in the military and is called on to join the S-Mission and it turns out that all members are ultra-elite and Mika feels great anxiety. There she finds Hiroto Amagawa whom she believes is the reason her best friend had died.

## 2. The Singing Battleship

The space station is attacked, so Mika and the crew are told to get in the mysterious ship, Bilkis. But there are still some people who are trapped inside the space station. In order to save them Mika goes inside the robot Shaft, which was created based on the technology of an alien civilization.

## 3. A Rendezvous In Space

It turns out that the giant ring was created by aliens. They are called the Nibil and the old men of the government, who want absolute power to control the Earth eternally, really want this technology because it is much more advanced than Earth's. Hiroto, the captain of Bilkis, meanwhile attacks the ring with the government's approval.

## 4. An Outpost

The Bilkis crew has now become criminals after disobeying orders from the Earth's government. In order to find a place to land, they decide to go to Ganymede, the satellite of Jupiter — but they're not welcome.

## 5. An Angel And The Spaceship

When Mika is piloting the Shaft robot, an ultra-small sized ring appears and sneaks into the spaceship. It starts sucking the blood of the crew to copy their appearance.

## 6. A Hotline From The Past

The Bilkis has to depart from Ganymede and then the crew encounters a small-sized spaceship. But it turns out to be a shuttle from the Earth — 300 years ago! Inside the 20th century styled spaceship there are three astronauts. They claim they encountered the giant ring and it made them travel forward into the future. Mika tries to befriend them; especially a captain named Larry.

## 7. Ring World

After the battle with the ring, the Tellurian (Earth) Government occupies Ganymede. Hiroto, after dealing with too many duties and a heavy responsibility, fell seriously ill and slipped into a coma. The ship's crew, who has now lost their captain, doesn't know what to do. Mario, the vice-captain, takes over and tries his best.

## 8. Moon Is The Emperor Of Merciless Darkness

Sergei Sneak, the man in charge of Ganymede, sends a message to the Bilkis. But instead, Remmy the subordinate of Mir Lotus, appears on the screen. It turns out Remmy is the revolutionary terrorist. But Lord Sneak is in fact deceiving both sides — the Earth Government and the revolutionaries. He wants all humans to be wiped out!

**That's all for now. This was just a primer to introduce you to the show. If you want more, buy the R2 DVDs or bug your favorite anime releaser!**

*Gene Shaft* aired on Wowow every Thursday at 6:30 from 4/5 to 6/28/2001 for a total of 13 episodes.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# SADAMITSU, THE DESTROYER: OVERVIEW

A juvenile delinquent hero? Director Koichi Ohata (his previous works include *MD Geist*, *Genocyber*, *Cybernetic Guardian* and *Blue Gender*) brings a retro 70's vibe to *Sadamitsu* for his fans (as the current nostalgia trend is for this time period). The show began broadcast on January 17th, 2001 through Wowow-TV at 6:30 on Wednesdays and is based on Masahiko Nakadaira's popular manga from the monthly *Ultra Jump* magazine.

As I started watching I wasn't sure if this was meant to be serious science fiction or not, as main character Sadamitsu (means "settled light") is really a simpleton who loves to fight, like a leader of a bike gang! I began to think that maybe Ohata wanted to present the show as a comedy so viewers could laugh at these pathetic creatures. The anime version is quite different from the manga, adding more female characters and creatures — as current popularity dictates.

The space criminal known as Deported Body, through default or design, falls upon the Earth and the "helmet-style data-living body" follows to collect the criminal while Sadamitsu and his buds are fighting against rival gang members. As the show begins with Mexican style music (the trumpet sounds especially great!) viewers will feel that something cool will happen! For those familiar with the 70's *Ultraman* series, the creatures kind of look like the ones from that show.

When you look at Sadamitsu, he really looks quite peculiar with his clothes, especially his large pants, stomach band and what's more, his rubber-soled socks (or shoes?) with the big toe separate (called jikatabi). You may wonder what kind of trend or fashion this is? A couple of decades ago, in the 70's, lots of men, like construction workers, were wearing this style of clothing to be able to work properly in the building sites. I suppose Sadamitsu adopted this style to look different from others and fight! When he meets the space detective helmet body, he names it "Mr. Junk", but he really tries to take care of him and feels duty bound to round up the space criminal bodies. As the episodes progress, Sadamitsu gains a very faithful brother-figure space-motorcycle called Kuron (means "runs pretty fast") who speaks like a member of the Yakuza or a biker gang. Kuron is a very lovable character who violated the speed limit in space, received a traffic ticket and has been categorized as a petty criminal since, even though he's not a real "criminal". Sadamitsu kind of adopts him as a younger brother who worships the ground he walks on. Kuron looks like a deformed lizard, but is nice at heart.

Does Sadamitsu have a love interest in this show? (Does *Gundam* have giant robots?). Outwardly, Yayoi Kamishiro appears to be a student that has transferred from a foreign country, but she is actually very mysterious. In fact she is the rider of a human shaped starship called Vulture and her mission is to liquidate all deported bodies. As Mr. Junk seals the criminals to ship them back into space, Vulture is like an executioner — a kind of Death God. Around episode 5, Sadamitsu realizes that Vulture is Yayoi and asks her loudly and defiantly, "Do you really enjoy killing and murdering them?" Yayoi becomes distressed over this question, wondering if her murderous desire comes from within or is just a manipulation of Vulture due to her assimilation when she was a child. She starts to question herself. "What should I do?" "Why am I here" "Who am I anyway?" Does she still have a gentle heart like most humans?

As Sadamitsu continues collecting the space-deported bodies, he feels swept away by his destiny with Yayoi. How can these two manage to live and make peace? They're being forced to change history in order to bring the future to Earth. What kind of world will they choose together?

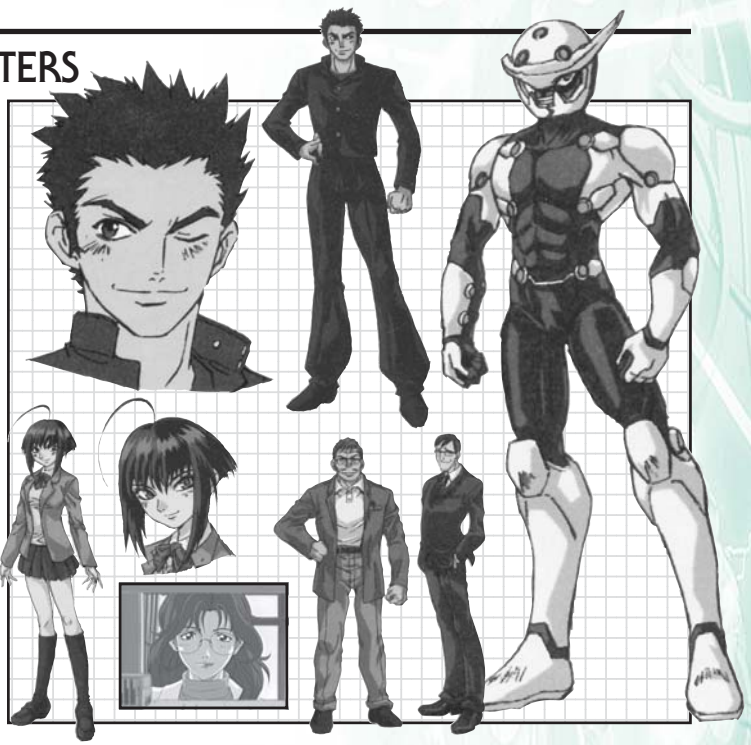
Only the closing episode opening theme has the Mexican flavoured song (with lyrics, the others have only the music), making viewers feel like they're watching *Zorro*? By the way, in Japanese the term "Yankee" has been adopted to describe juvenile delinquents (it has nothing to do with Americans), so that's how they call Sadamitsu in the show. Recommended for anime fans who love battle scenes (reminiscent of *Guyver*) and a few good laughs.

| Designs: **3** | Animation: **3.5** | Soundtrack: **4** | Story: **3.5** | Translation: **—** | Average: **3.5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

***Sadamitsu The Destroyer*** © 2001 Masahiko Nakadaira • Shueisha / SME Visual Works. Video provided by Michael Liu. Info: www.sonymusic.com.co.jp/Animation/sadamitsu/index.html

Kenyu Destroy Bardel (Order #56033633)

# SADAMITSU, THE DESTROYER: CHARACTERS



**Sadamitsu Tsubaki**: A high school student with a delinquent streak, and yet he's truly straight, honest and of strong virtue. He takes care of his companions and followers as a leader would. He heads a gang that happens to be the strongest in Saitama Prefecture. In a moment of happenstance, he meets the "helmet-style data-living body" and when he is in grave danger this "body" protects him. Sadamitsu feels bad and decides to collect the criminals with the "body", whom he christens "Ponkotsu".

**Ponkotsu (Mr. Junk)**: He has arrived on Earth to collect space criminals called "The Deported Bodies". He's basically a "helmet-style data-living body" and, with Sadamitsu, the duo begins collecting the baddies.

**Yayoi Kamishiro**: Seemingly just a transfer student, but she's from space and, as the Vulture, kills the space criminals' deported bodies. She seems to have a connection and to be related to Sadamitsu.

**Ms. Chieko**: The students call her Chieko-sensei and she is a teacher (health and sanitation nurse). She's always attacked by the space criminals and is sort of a sad sack character. She only appears in the anime (she's not in the manga). Quite sexy and the students love her and depend on her.

**Akinobu Tsubaki**: Sadamitsu's father. He's a master of karate and is extremely strict. He works as a special agent/doctor for the police.

**Detective Gomimaru**: A bit wicked, scheming black-hearted man despite the fact he works as a detective. He's trying to establish a law for "Receiving the Space Criminals". He is, in fact, a spineless man.

# SADAMITSU, THE DESTROYER: SYNOPSES

## 1. Fine Fight! The Arrival Of Sadamitsu

Sadamitsu loves a good fight and he's on his way to a scuffle at the Arakawa embankment. Suddenly, a weird Space Deported Body named Muzan, who looks like a mantis, arrives. By accident, Sadamitsu destroys the Space Following Body, whom he names Mr. Junk. Meanwhile, Muzan loves female meat and goes everywhere to look for it. Ms. Chieko is in danger!

## 2. One Hit! The Completion Of The Collection

Sadamitsu gets angry and kills Muzan, but he fails to collect Muzan's body. Mr. Junk's mission is to capture the criminals and send them back into space. Meanwhile, Muzan is given an electric shock at the Police Hospital and is revived once again, becoming even more violent. He goes after Ms. Chieko at her apartment.

## 3. The Birth Of The Faithful Brother! Kuron Out Of Control.

Yayoi arrives from abroad as a transfer student, but in reality she is a Vulture. Sadamitsu has no interest in studying and is sleeping on the school's roof. Then Space Deported Body Kuron, who looks like a motorbike, starts going crazy and brings Mitsuko Takasugi from the class. He runs amok on the highway and Sadamitsu tries to capture him. After the ordeal, Kuron becomes a faithful brother-figure to Sadamitsu.

## 4. The Investigation Order For Vulture! The Danger At The Health Exam!

Vulture is like a small-styled spaceship and Mr. Junk wonders who is wearing it to murder the Space Deported Bodies. He thinks that the Vulture has connected to a local human. At school, a health exam is taking place and a perverted Body comes to steal the females' clothes.

## 5. A Woman Is The Death God For A Man

The Vulture continues eliminating the Space Deported Bodies and Sadamitsu is angry at the Vulture asking, "Are you really enjoying killing them?" The next day, Sadamitsu finds a little puppy that was hurt. Yayoi appears and asks him, "Are you enjoying taking care of him?"

## 6. Cherry Blossom's Are Man's Perplexity Flower

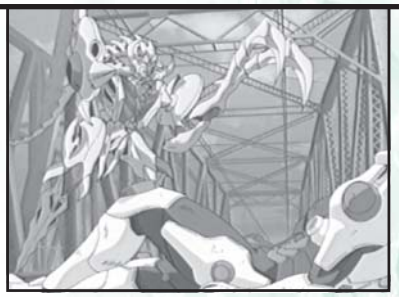
Yayoi acts very strangely and Sadamitsu wants to find out more about her, wandering in the street looking for her. Sadamitsu ends up at a mysterious Shinto shrine. Under the cherry blossoms, Yayoi asks him, "Don't you remember?" Sadamitsu has no idea what she's talking about and ends up more perplexed.

## 7. A Man! Eat The Fist Of Life!

Four Bodies fall upon the Earth. Gorai, Ido, Ruga and Akuni. The four bodies make Mr. Junk unable to move and Sadamitsu is in grave danger! But the Vulture suddenly appears and helps him saying, "I will protect you."

## 8. A Man! Under One Love Umbrella Of Tears.

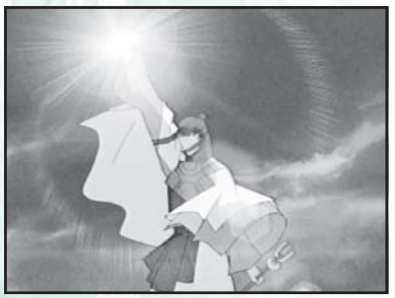
The Vulture makes Mr. Junk even stronger than before and he also becomes more violent for some reason. Sadamitsu has little choice but to leave him due to his violent behaviour. But Mr. Junk was attacked and hacked. At the shrine, Sadamitsu finds a love umbrella.



*Sadamitsu* aired on Wowow-TV every Wednesday at 6:30 from 1/17 to 3/21/2001 for the unusual total of 10 episodes!

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# TALES OF ETERNIA: OVERVIEW



Are you a video game fan? Then you must not miss the new anime *Tales of Eternia — The Animation*, an adaptation of Namco's Playstation game with character designs by Japan's top anime character designer, Ms. Mutsumi Inomata. Of course the original role playing game has its own storyline and the anime version is an "extra" story with added characters. Four unknown young boys and girls struggle to save the world from the Grand Fall that will cause great danger and the collapse of the world, eventually leading to its disappearance. In November 2000, the role playing game was released and became an instant hit. The anime soon followed, starting from January 8th 2001, on Wowow-TV Mondays at 6:30pm, and was produced by Xebec and Production I.G., with supervision by Toshimitsu Otsuki. Wow, all the people involved in the production are part of Japan's top quality anime producers, bringing viewers a magical fantasy world (sorcery... and swords, of course!).

The major characters, Lidd, Farah, Keel and Meldy, are just like us — in other words just ordinary boys and girls. They're not particularly brave or heroic, just young and still learning. They found out about the great disaster facing the world and formed a group to travel and save the world. Even these days, young boys and girls still dream of adventure and this type of adventure RPG is becoming increasingly popular.

As Lidd and his companions embark on their journey, they have many mishaps and difficulties to overcome and they must learn how to get past these obstacles. The Role Playing Game version emphasizes obstacles to clear, but the anime offers different impediments to their goal, especially Lidd who seems to bring on many troubles with girls (with his six-pack stomach, does he have the sort of looks that just ask for female troubles?). After awhile, viewers may start to feel sorry for Lidd who's constantly pushed around by the girls around him. Farah always provokes him, but all these girls seem to show their affection towards him in a rather twisted manner. Farah is obviously in love with him, but treats him like they are already married. Malone is fond of his swordsmanship and Collina, in her way, admires him for his bravery.

The show itself seems to be bringing a journey aimed to school age children. Life itself is like a journey, but it's a lot more fun when we can travel by ourselves. *Tale of Eternia* has a fantasy touch, but the viewers can enjoy the trip through the character's eyes, as if we are all on board a ship going to mysterious places and inhaling the breath of adventure. Don't you get excited when you go on a trip? Or do you enjoy just wandering around? There are of course many types of journeys in our lives and in this anime, all 4 major characters discover within themselves all sorts of possibilities. As they travel, they meet different people in a city on the south island of Belcagne. It's a beautiful tropical island (the buildings look like ones in Bangkok or the island of Bali) with lovely scenery, blue sky and ocean. The quartet discover many things here, the background of the threat, mystery, problems and the people with whom they meet and part ways. And they develop human ties. As for the game version, a player can be the major character, but when a gamer watches this, they might find things a wee bit different! Lidd and friends face trouble after trouble during their quest, but through ties to others and affection, they try to clear the obstacles.

I also feel the story is symbolic in showing "freedom". The group of four are not superheroes or anything like that — they're just like anybody else who has decided they must protect the world. In our lives, which is easier: living under freedom or under restraint? The creators here seem to be saying to the youth of today "Travel, enjoy your own adventure and discover yourselves! Boys and girls, be caring and free!"

Lidd is the central character, but all he wants to do is lie down in the green grass and stare at the beautiful blue sky. He makes us feel like we should all try our best. Life is the journey. Maybe we'll experience good things tomorrow. A fun anime for all viewers.

| Designs: | **3** | Animation: | **3.5** | Soundtrack: | **3** | Story: | **4** | Translation: | **—** | Average: | **3.5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

***Tales of Eternia*** © Mutsumi Inomata / Namco. Video provided by Michael Liu.

Kieryn Beesley-Bardell (Order #56033683)

# TALES OF ETERNIA: CHARACTERS

**Lidd Harshell**: A boy who make his living as a hunter. His most favourite thing to do is to lie down and stare at the sky to relax. One day, he was witness to a ball of fire that was falling from the sky (it was Meldy!) and he decided to save the world and started his journey of adventure with his friends.

**Farah Elstead**: A childhood friend of Lidd, with whom she grew up. She has a green thumb and helped out with her aunt's vegetable garden. She's also very good at martial arts. She decides to accompany Lidd, but she may be a bit too practical for him.

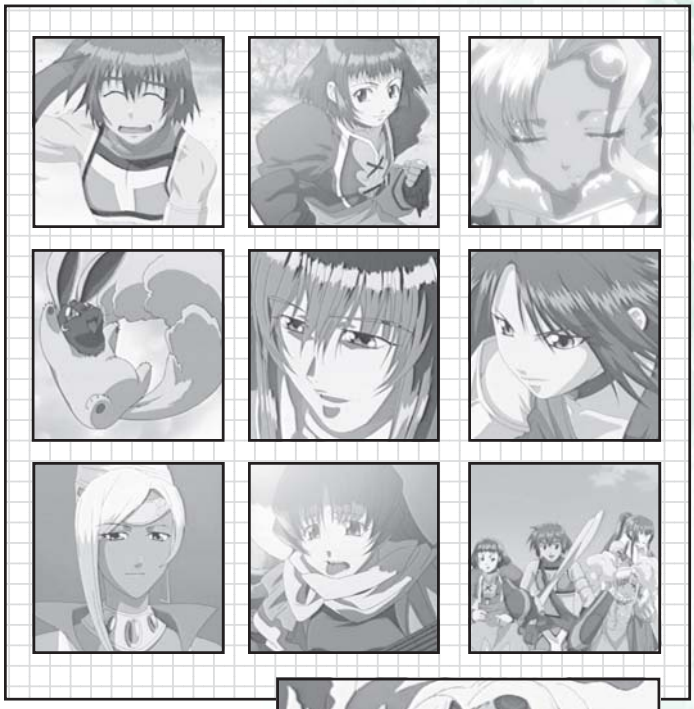
**Meldy**: She's an inhabitant of Celestia that came to Infernia. She has a pet (looks like a squirrel) named Quickie. When she has to fight, Quickie helps her out. She follows Lidd and Farah.

**Keel Tsuaibel**: A scholar that imparts knowledge to the other members of the group involved in this adventure. He was at Mintz University and he always carries books to read and explains many things.

**Malone Burucano**: She falls in love with Lidd's swordsmanship ability. She wants Lidd to become her partner, but Farah doesn't seem to like her.

**Excia**: A head of state in Belcagne.

**Collina**: She's a wandering minstrel of minimal talent and fond of Meldy. She's small and blunders a lot.



# TALES OF ETERNIA: SYNOPSES

## 1. The Adventure Of The Facing World

There are two worlds that face each other, Infernia and Celestia. The Grand Fall is coming soon to destroy both worlds! Lidd, childhood pal Farah and their friend Keel realize the time of the danger is near and decide to go to Mt. Falos, in Infernia, in order to save everyone. So begins their long journey to Mt. Falos, with their new companion Meldy.

## 2. A Pothunter On Top Of The Ocean.

Lidd encounters a girl named Malone who is impressed with his sword abilities and wants him to be her partner. She wants a partner so she can receive the prize money from the head of state of Belcagne, a city of the ocean. Farah objects, but they end up in Belcagne anyway.

## 3. Blowing At The South Island

Lidd and company succeeds in defeating the devil of the ocean and they are now rich! The lady lord of Belcagne offered them room and board in a high-class hotel to rest. Lidd and Keel really enjoy the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Farah gets upset because she feels they should continue on to Mt. Falos to carry out their mission. Then, a hurricane arrives!

## 4. The Big Battle of Ladies!

The giant hurricane has made everything difficult since all the ships are destroyed. Lidd and the others are now stuck on Belcagne. Farah is upset (I detect a pattern here) and asks Malone to lend her flying dragon Parossa, but Malone declines. Farah gets even more upset and uglier towards Malone and they end up publicly settling the dispute with a swimming match.

## 5. An Elegy of Singing Princesses

Because of the destruction caused by the hurricane, prices of raw materials has risen sharply. Everybody wants to build a ship, but they simply can't afford it. Farah, Meldy, Lidd and Collina decide to work. Meldy and Collina try their hands at several jobs, but fail miserably. In the end, they manage to save enough cash to build a ship.

## 6. The Mystery of Belcagne

Lidd discovers a mysterious coin at the bottom of the ocean. Keel is very much interested in the find and in researching it; he feels there must be a connection to the hot spring of the mountain. He also finds it odd that the ruins are not listed on a map or in a book. He decides to investigate the ruins.

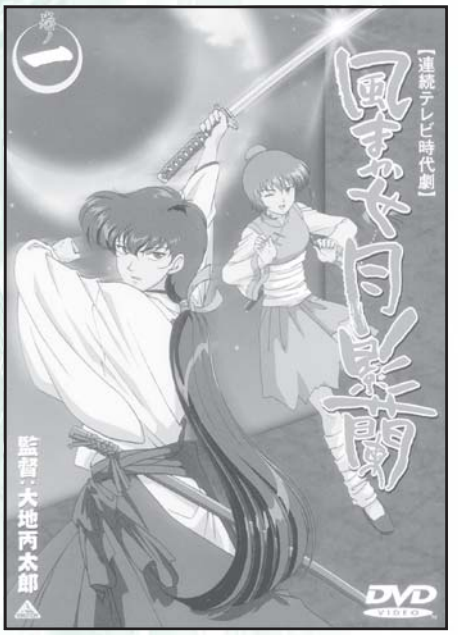
## 7. The Black Wing Special

Farah helps three people who are caught in the net of fishermen. They claim they are brave warriors of the Black Wing!

*Tales of Eternia* aired on Wowow every Monday at 18:30 from 1/08 to 3/26/2001 for a total of 13 episodes.

Kieryn Breslow-Bardell (Order # 53033689)

# KAZE MAKASE TSUKI KAGE RAN: OVERVIEW



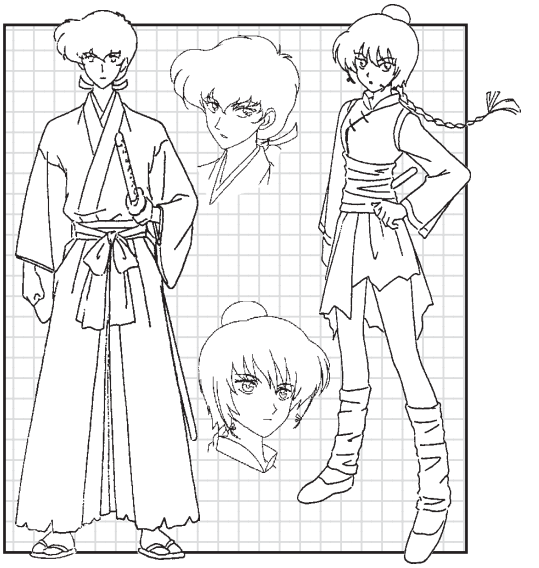
Did you enjoy the anime comedy *Jubei-chan The Ninja Girl*? Now, from the same director, Akitaro Daichi, comes another costume play (or Jidai-geki) entitled *Leave it to the Wind: Tsuki Kage Ran*! Daichi has had his hand in numerous comedies in the past such as *Akazukin Cha Cha* (PA #48: 15-22), *Ojamaru* and *Urayasu Tekken Family* (PA #66: 69). Comedy is his main specialty, although he has done a few serious anime.

As I started watching this show I felt that it was an old-fashioned period drama/comedy and also very simple. The name of main character, Tsuki Kage Ran ("Moon Shadow Orchid Blossom"), is a little old-fashioned as well and she (yes, the warrior is a girl) is a skilled swordsperson, but without any secret tactics or special moves to show off with. A little cavalier in her view of things, she spends her time drinking sake like there's no tomorrow and is easy going with an attitude of "leave it to the wind" (i.e. I shall only deal with things as they come to me and not take anything that seriously). The show was on air on Wowow every Wednesday at 19:00 or 18:30 from January 26th to April 19th 2000 for a total of 13 episodes. It has been acquired by Bandai for a North American release.

This show is so laid back that you will feel like lying down on the couch with a bag of potato chips to munch on and laugh comfortably. In some ways it's a road movie (kind of a slow moving trip though) of Ran and Miyao (a Chinese girl with cat-style martial arts. Where have I seen that before?). Have you seen any Japanese Samurai Films? The setting and costumes are practically the same here, showing life during Japan's orthodox period drama (Edo period in this case) with a comical touch for younger anime fans who may not be accustomed to watching this type of show after a steady diet of fantasy and science fiction. I have a feeling that director Daichi really likes this type of show and really seems to enjoy creating and making one. There is something different here compared to other shows.

There may be 13 episodes in total, but there is no continuity between them, meaning the story ends in each episode without a much larger umbrella plot to link them together. Each episode stars Ran and Miyao, but they meet up with different characters in each episode and things are resolved by the end. A couple of guest screenplay writers for the series were Ryosuke Takahashi (Ep. 13), who did *Votoms* and *Gasaraki*, and Tatsuo Sato (Ep. 12) who worked on *Nadesico*. Viewers can easily enjoy the different adventures of Ran and Miyao. There are no complicated plots to follow — just simple stories with swordspeople. As they say, no matter what you do and where you go, the sun and troubles will always follow you.

Ran uses her sword to cut these troubles in a very refreshing manner, making the viewers feel great! Ran herself doesn't care much for politics or other things in society, but she always puts things right, ethically settling problems with her sword of justice. Her sword ability is top notch! Because Ran is a woman, her sword skill is flexible and with speed. If you're a samurai movie fan, Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (*The Bodyguard*) is highly recommended, as scenes from the anime (especially episode 2) are clearly a homage to this master of Japanese cinema.



Aside from the comedy, Ran is a bit of a heavy drinker (if you're an under age viewer, please don't imitate her behaviour. Enjoy *Leave it to the Wind* responsibly) and she even takes a cup of sake offered by the bad guys as well! Do you remember those 3 stooges from Jubei-chan? In episode 1, we are introduced to another trio, the Bonsai Family boys, who will make the viewer laugh! In episode 5, viewers can enjoy classic Japanese Ukiyo-e paintings as well. Ukiyo-e artist Sharaku Sai falls in love with Ran and asks her to be his model.

Do travels bring more troubles? Ran seems to want to avoid mishaps, but Miyao is a trouble magnet bringing more Ran's way to solve. Miyao looks horrible when she drinks! Overall, *Leave it to the Wind* is a funny show full of laughter with a period drama taste! Enjoy your trip on this funny journey.

| Designs: **3.5** | Animation: **3.5** | Soundtrack: **3** | Story: **3.5** | Translation: **—** | Average: **3.5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

***Kaze Makase Tsuki Kage Ran*** © Akitaro Daichi • Madhouse / Bandai Visual. R2 DVD (Emotion, BCBA-0468, 25 min., ¥3,800) provided by www.cdjapan.co.jp.

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